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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet contains several essays on the culture and ethnic groups of New Orleans, Louisiana. Included are: (1) a discussion by Joseph Logsdon on the uniqueness of New Orleans culture, marked by its cuisine, interethnic mixtures, and its politics; (2) an article on theories of ethnicity and neo ethnicity, by Joseph V. Guillotte, III; (3) a paper by Ethelyn Orsc that explores the concept of nativism, using data from a study of the revitalization of the New Orleans Greek community; (4) a description of the life of Greek Merchant Marine sailors in New Orleans, and suggestions as to how the established Greek community can help the newcomers, by Andrew Horton; (5) an account of a Filipino family that has lived in Louisiana for seven generations, by Marina E. Espina; (6) a report by Martha C. Ward and Zachary Gussow on recent Vietnamese immigrants to New Orleans; (7) a discussion of linguistic similarities and differences between Cubans and Canary Islanders ("Islenos") in the New Orleans area, by Beatriz Varela; (8) a description of the Afro American celebration of St. Joseph's Day in Central City, by Andrew J. Kaslow; and (9) an article by Margery Freeman describing the Ethnic Heritage Studies Project sponsored by St. Mark's Community Center in New Orleans' predominantly black Seventh Ward. (GC)

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PERSPECTIVES ON ETHNICITY IN NEW ORLEANS

edited by
JOHN COOKE

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in New Orleans

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*New Orleans Faces, Sketched in 1871
by Alfred R. Waud for Every Saturday.*

Introduction
by
John Cooke

This collection provides perspectives on two questions. First, what does "ethnic" mean? This question arises not just at ethnicity symposia but in less rarified atmospheres, as when someone expresses interest in "ethnic restaurants." A definition of "ethnic," as the term is often used, is advanced in a recent V. S. Naipaul novel when a character describes his activities in London: "What I was trying to do was to run a movie theatre, an ethnic theatre. You know the word? It means all the foreign groups in a place." A no-nonsense definition but one rendered inadequate by the speaker's own complex ethnicity. He is an Indian raised in the Swahili culture of the East African coast, who subsequently defines himself as a member of markedly different communities in the African interior, Canada, and England. He himself might be called a number of foreign groups in more than one place. The essays below are concerned not so much with a proper definition of "ethnic," but with some of the complications, such as this character's background illustrates, of trying to define a person's or a group's ethnicity.

The second, related question is how ethnic identity is perpetuated or, as so noticeably in the last decade, revitalized. This was, to take an instance close to home, Calvin Trillin's concern this April in one of his "U.S. Journals" for *The New Yorker*. In "Mamou, La.: Thoughts on a Cajun Renaissance While Watching Chickens Being Chased," Trillin attributes the resurgent interest in Cajun culture since the early fifties to its "cultural cements" of language, music and food, and in doing so provides a lively analysis of the necessary elements for a cultural revival. Commentaries on the more problematical revivals of groups not so well-endowed with these cements are described in some of the following essays.

The definition of "ethnic" by Naipaul's character is imprecise, but no more so than those which are prevalent in our popular culture. The labels used in reference to ethnic groups are themselves a crude index of this imprecision. Various colored groups in America are, for example, often identified by foods they eat or are deemed to resemble, such as tacos, apples, bananas and coconuts. This terminology carries over to segments within a group, for instance, oreo and *Juksing* (bamboo: used by Japanese nationals to characterize American-born Japanese as hollow in the middle and closed at both ends). Such labels can, of course, be viewed in terms of the user's intent to denigrate, but they reflect more broadly a desire to simplify a complex identity. Three of the essays below point up some of the complexities involved. First, there is creolization, the blending of different ethnic groups in forming an individual or group identity. Marina Espina, in her discussion of the "Cajun Filipinos," indicates how settlement and marriage patterns have fostered one such blending process. There is also the opposite case in which groups share an important determinant of ethnic identity, such as language, and are thereby assumed to belong to the same group, but have in fact been molded by broadly different histories. Beatriz Varela's discussion of the language patterns of the *Isleños* of St. Bernard Parish and the New Orleans Cubans shows how some cultural linkages are reflected in their varieties of

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Spanish, but more centrally how their language patterns indicate substantially different cultures. Andy Horton's concern in his treatment of the established Greek community and the Greek seamen is a similar one: that bonds of religion, country of origin and food establish significant linkages between these two groups yet are not sufficient to form a common ethnic culture.

A related difficulty is who to include within an ethnic group even when a primary ethnic identity is assignable. This year's Conference on Ethnic and Minority Studies at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse took as its theme "The Invisible Ethnic: Those Who Refuse to Participate." The question posed was whether those who don't openly display an ethnic identity — those perceived to have "lost the faith" — were part of the culture. The presentations disclosed multiple factors which bear on the strength of identification with the group: area of residence, income level, native language, education and pressures from the majority culture, to name a few. Thus, the complexity of an individual's relationship to his ethnic group renders such labels as Uncle Tom and Uncle Tornahawk as inadequate as those based on food.

The problem in defining ethnic identity is not simply one of the intensity of identification with a culture but of situation. In *New Orleans Ethnic Cultures*, last year's booklet by The Committee on Ethnicity in New Orleans, Joseph Guillotte described one of his students who was quite emphatic about his Greek heritage; he was considering joining the Greek Orthodox Church and wanted to study Greek culture and history. Dr. Guillotte expressed surprise when seeing him marching at the head of the Saint Joseph's Day parade with an Italian-American Marching Society. When questioned later, the student saw no contradiction in holding different ethnic identities in different situations. Such changing identifications are not uncommon. Andy Kaslow, in a study of Central City, the black neighborhood running uptown from Earhart to Louisiana, writes of a wealthy white renovator in the area who drives a Rolls Royce, collects Haitian art, and is the president of the otherwise all-black area improvement association. In a similar vein, Mr. Kaslow's article below describes the activities of Mardi Gras "Indians" in Central City on Saint Joseph's Day and of Israelite churches in the 7th Ward. Such instances indicate that the "ethnic theatre," at least in New Orleans, is more complex than that proposed by Naipaul's character.

Another concern is the city's ethnic theatre taken as a whole, that is, the distinctive ethnicity of New Orleanians. George Reinecke, in an account of the histories of the city's ethnic groups, concludes:

Wholly unnoticed by most, however, is that, starting with the French culture as acted upon by the Black, German, Spanish, etc., New Orleans has created its own ethnicity. This process, which I have called "creolization," has left its mark on almost every modern New Orleanian, producing differences in custom, outlook, and values when compared with the remainder of the United States.

Joe Logsdon in this booklet considers some of the contemporary manifestations of the New Orleans ethnic group and some of the threats, past and present, to its continued vitality. While Martha Ward and Zachary Gussow's major interest is providing information on the city's newest ethnic group, the Vietnamese, they raise questions about the effect on the city's customs and values of the introduction of the first substantial truly foreign and "exotic" population to settle in New Orleans during the past

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one hundred years.

Trillin, in his comments on the Cajun Renaissance, raises another set of issues: not what "ethnic" is, but how ethnic culture is revitalized and preserved. The process by which group identity is fostered is more complex certainly than those, such as white backlash, featured in the popular media. The variety of elements that generally come into play in this process can be illustrated, in brief, by the recent efforts to revitalize the culture of the *Isleños*, a people who first traveled from the Canary Islands to New Orleans during Gov. Galvez's regime. Efforts of at least four kinds contributed to the revitalization of *Isleño* culture. First, Beatriz Varela of the UNO Department of Foreign Languages organized a symposium on *Isleño* culture three years ago to help clarify the problems and indicate some directions for action. Subsequently and most importantly, some of the older generation of *Isleños* returned to the Canary Islands to study *Isleño* culture there. They collected folk material, such as *decimas*, and on their return gathered similar material in St. Bernard. Third, our Committee on Ethnicity in New Orleans held joint sessions with the *Isleños* and Cubans, the idea being that the two groups, which share a common language, could benefit from the preservation efforts of each other. Finally, through a large federal grant, intensive Spanish-language instruction began this January in the St. Bernard schools. More extended treatments of revitalization are provided in this collection. Joseph Guilloté examines the inadequacies of the widely-held notion that white ethnic backlash against the affirmation by blacks of their culture is the spur for, even the basis of, white ethnic groups' revival and cohesion. Ethelyn Orso discusses a specific instance of revitalization, that of the Greeks in New Orleans, through their holding of yearly festivals, completion of a Hellenic Cultural Center, and the new formation of a Hellenic Cultural Society.

For the *Isleños*, as for other groups, revitalization will depend more on their own efforts than those of folklorists and students of ethnicity. As Trillin surmises, the Cajun Renaissance got underway through people "presumably wanting a good time rather than a legitimate ethnic experience." While this is so, organized efforts to spark interest in ethnicity and assist groups have been valuable. Efforts of this kind have been more pronounced in New Orleans during the past year than any time in recent history. A major opportunity for the general public to familiarize itself with the city's ethnic heritage was provided by "The Surprise of the Melting Pot in New Orleans," the Jambalaya Program segment focusing on ethnicity. A mixture of ten lectures and symposia treated the processes of creolization, Americanization and nationalization in the city's history and touched on the role of ethnics in the development of the city's architecture, cuisine, music and festivals. A program focusing on specific ethnic communities was continued by the Committee on Ethnicity in New Orleans, through funding by the Louisiana Committee for the Humanities. Last September the Committee held a symposium which consisted of presentations on seven of the city's cultures and of films, among them Maurice Martinez's study of the Mardi Gras "Indians," Ethelyn Orso's of Saint Joseph's Day, and St. Mark's Community Center's on the culture of Treme and the 7th Ward. The Committee's major activity was the organization of over a dozen sessions on issues of interest to selected communities: Black, Greek, Italian, Filipino, Cuban and *Isleño*. Most of these sessions are de-

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scribed in the following essays; those which are not include our co-sponsorship of "Heritage Day at Treme" and of the Annual Conference of the Italian-American Historical Association of New Orleans. There were, of course, other organizations which focused on more specific groups. For instance, through an Ethnic Heritage Studies Grant, St. Mark's Community Center trained 7th Ward/Treme residents in interviewing techniques, and they subsequently collected reminiscences of over 250 of the area's long-time residents. Similarly, the Arts Council of Greater New Orleans sponsored studies of two of the city's historic black areas.

These efforts indicate a quickening of interest in New Orleans ethnic cultures, but it is far from certain that similar efforts will continue. All the above programs noted are funded by grants of limited duration, none extending beyond the present year. In addition, the programs have not been part of a coherent study of New Orleans ethnicity. Some groups have been given substantial attention, others none. And the programs are for the most part uncoordinated, few attempts having been made for them to act in concert or share resources. This problem is illustrated most graphically by the applications this year by the University of New Orleans, St. Mark's Community Center and the Orleans Parish Schools for large grants with substantial overlap in the proposed projects. The prospects for establishing a large-scale, more inclusive and continuing program would be increased if these and other groups were to unify their efforts.

Coordination of efforts is only the most obvious step needed to continue the current work in ethnic studies. Public policy decisions, such as the building of I-10 through Treme, affect the city's ethnic cultures. Means of effecting such decisions require consideration, as do renovation and the ethics of collecting information about ethnic cultures. Yet another issue, how to teach about ethnic groups and their interactions, is dealt with by Margery Freeman at the close of this booklet. Until such matters receive more consideration, it will be inaccurate to speak of an ethnic renaissance in New Orleans as people do of a Cajun Renaissance. Our intention in this collection is, in part, to foster thought about how to bring such a renaissance to fruition ten or twenty years hence.



Sugar Mill, Payday, ca. 1900, by George F. Mugnier

**The Surprise of the Melting Pot:
We Can All Become New Orleanians
by
Joseph Logsdon**

I was not born in New Orleans, yet I now consider myself a New Orleanian. That identity is more important to me today than being called an American or a Slavic-American. Let me explain.

Based on the current definition of ethnicity, I should call myself a second generation Slavic-American. True, my name is Logsdon, quite clearly of Anglo-Saxon derivation; but my tinge of ethnic character, in the pattern of most Americans, comes from my mother whose culture fashioned and controlled me as a child. She was a Slovak, born at the turn of the century in Czechoslovakia or, more precisely, in the Slovak dominated area of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. She left Czechoslovakia in 1922, shortly after it had become a new nation state, and came to live in Chicago, near the burgeoning stockyards of that elemental American city.

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Slavs dominated the neighborhood where I was born, but no single European ethnic group ever completely filled an immigrant settlement in Chicago as Afro-Americans now concentrate their numbers in modern urban ghettos. A Polish family and two German families occupied the other apartments in our four-flat tenement. An O'Reilly family owned the house on one side of us, and a Pusateri family owned the house on the other.

Was my neighborhood a melting pot at that time? No, not quite. Sure, the people associated with each other and probably shared a few culinary delights. The adults managed during my youth to cooperate within a radical CIO union to end the outrageous exploitation and divisions that had been carefully nurtured by the huge stockyard corporations. Pre-school children like myself from various European backgrounds went off each morning to the Bethlehem Settlement House, and later we all attended the public schools where we even added a few Mexican and Black children to our ranks.

What came of this fantastic *mélange*? At first very little. Most of my mother's generation kept to their own kind, in their own churches and associations, seeking out companionship with those who spoke their native language. A few like my mother might eventually be cast out of their tribes for various unforgivable sins: when her arranged first marriage proved a disaster, she obtained a divorce and married my non-Catholic, Missouri-bred, Anglo-Saxon father, who had migrated to Chicago seeking work during the Depression.

The process of assimilation was far different for the second generation. The language of our mothers was seldom learned and we quickly cast off their "foreignness." Our parents knew that to succeed we had to model our lives as closely as possible on the language, dress, manners, and tastes of the dominant Anglo-American Protestants. Of course, we continued to cook a few tasty morsels fondly recalled from our childhoods, but we retained little else from the old world of our parents. The bedroom proved to be a real melting pot. One of my sisters married a German-American, the other went through various attachments — first, an Italian; then a Polish-Jew, and finally, a Bohemian-American. I married a Norwegian-American. In that physical sense, America has been a fantastic melting pot: with incredible speed, distinct European identity and exclusiveness quickly vanished — the language, the cohesiveness, the culture, and, for the women, even their generic ethnic names.

What was gained? Well, we never became Anglo-Saxon, but we obtained moderate prosperity, improved educations, and occasionally impressive social mobility. What was lost? A good deal. Most descendants of European ethnics have lost all tradition in their lives and with it all sense of place and community. In its stead they find a cultural and spiritual void, a terrifying emptiness and boredom. Only the mass produced goods and services of their labor binds them together today. They can work and buy; they can be hustled and bamboozled. In conversation, they can discuss little more than their purchases and the TV programs that encourage them to buy still more. They can go to Protestant, Catholic and Jewish places of worship. They can be liberals or conservatives, Democrats or Republicans — whatever those terms might mean. Finally, and with increasing importance to them, they can be

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white.

Oh, yes, there is a melting pot in America. Of course, some immigrants still stand out after two or three generations: a few groups isolated by geography such as the Cajuns, or by religion such as the orthodox Jews, or by a combination of the two such as the Amish. But even these groups, if they are white or white enough, face the inevitable force of assimilation in our society. In recent times, some persons have tried to recapture their ethnic identities by political assertion or by some specialized material consumption. They may be hopelessly romantic, but they are at least more alert than others to the reason for the void in their lives.

The disappointments of the American melting pot have, I guess, made me become a New Orleanian. We have an unusual and strange city where something has taken place that is different from the process in such cities as Chicago. I do not mean that rapid assimilation has not affected the Europeans and their descendants who settled in this city. The nineteenth-century immigrants are hardly discernable any longer. The Irish, Germans, Spanish, French and the early Italians have almost disappeared as distinct groups in New Orleans. Even the Italians are melting away as an exclusive and identifiable community. Assimilation of old world cultures is inevitable; no people in an American city can maintain a culture very long removed from the setting that once created and sustained it.

The difference in New Orleans shows up in the end result, not in the process itself. Here the process of assimilation created something of inestimable value — a new public culture related to place and tradition. Nowhere else in America has a new culture of this sort developed. New Orleanians have created an original cuisine which has drawn from all of the major population groups that came to the city. We have developed a unique architectural style which provides distinction to the place where we live and work. From the French Quarter down to countless residential neighborhoods, an observer can see a vista that looks like no other place in the world. And who could ignore the music? We have concocted over the years a new art form — perhaps America's only contribution to the world's stock of art — that gives international reputation to our city. And finally we have fashioned a new form of festival and community celebration that includes not only the weeks of Mardi Gras but other public affairs which delight our senses.

This public culture is not superficial. It constitutes the fabric of daily life for many people, providing continuous sensual pleasure and satisfying our need for communal identity. It also stimulates pride of place. We can feel that pride when outsiders come to the city or when strangers recognize us as New Orleanians outside our borders. Few of us will ever gain such personal recognition by simply revealing ourselves as Italian-Americans, Slavic-Americans, Afro-Americans or Irish-Americans.

The city's public culture becomes our own as long as we participate in it and help to sustain it. It belongs to nobody and yet it belongs to everybody. No single group can claim it as their own, no matter how much they may have contributed to it, no matter how long their families may have resided in the area. Even today an individual can belong and contribute to it, for it is a living culture. You can occupy or restore one of the old houses; you can master and even add to the cuisine; you can mask for Mardi Gras or form a Krewe; you can play the traditional music or join the second line

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behind a marching band. You do not buy or simply observe it; you become part of it. The culture is a public treasure for any inhabitant of the city willing to appreciate and enjoy it.

No other city in America has created this kind of meaningful activity for the daily lives of its citizens. In New Orleans, we have developed a new ethnicity from old world and new world ingredients that now belongs to this one place on the face of the globe. Shotgun houses, bowls of gumbo, marching jazz bands, and sequined "Indians" constantly remind you that this is a different place. We have no need to regret the loss of our ancestors' habits and customs. We have our own public culture — a composite drawn from many peoples' contributions. We can reflect upon our own past and its joys, decide upon our needs, and determine our own wants. Most Americans do not have that choice. They are divorced from their past, and other persons manipulate their needs and therefore their wants.

It is not easy to explain why New Orleans is so different. It is not different because French is still spoken or because you can find italians or pizza, Jews or synagogues, Irish or green beer, Blacks or spirituals, Latinos or flamenco. You can find any one of those ethnic characteristics elsewhere in America. Nor is it because *all* those characteristics can be found here. Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Boston or Baltimore have similar populations and ethnic cultures. The difference in New Orleans is due instead to historical circumstance, geography, and just plain luck.

The original diversity of the population probably helped shape our cultural development. The French were never able to create a New France as the English created a New England. Almost from the beginning, South Louisiana had a diverse population of Frenchmen, Germans, Italians, Indians, Africans, and Spaniards. It contained a mixed population well before Chicago, Boston, New York or Cleveland. Even into the middle of the nineteenth century only New York had drawn more European immigrants to its midst. The diversity of the population amazed early travelers to New Orleans; they could find comparisons only in such crossroads of the world as Venice and Vienna.

The French and Spanish rulers also played a role. They seemed much more willing to tolerate difference and diversity than their Anglo-American counterparts in the cities of the United States. Indeed, they sometimes even applauded the African culture of their slaves. As a result, West African dancing, festival, and music as well as cuisine and architecture continued to survive openly without the relentless repression that occurred in British America. The French and Spanish seemed to consider the exotic as something not only intriguing but inviting; in fact, their taste went beyond culture to physical contact — even to marriage or some lesser bond of mutual obligation. They could certainly be as cruel and exploitive as the English; race, however, did not completely obscure black talent, beauty or sensuousness. Nowhere on the North American continent has African culture, as a result, left such an enduring legacy. Nowhere certainly has European and African culture blended so fruitfully.

The setting, no doubt, played a part in encouraging the city's early cultural interchange. Geography made New Orleans an island surrounded by swamp or open water. Limited space confined the population to narrow strips of land and forced it

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into greater physical intimacy than Americans in the more open sites of the Atlantic coast or interior plains and prairies.

Widespread commingling was the key to the cultural development of New Orleans, for the unique blending of the culture was not imposed from above; it was not the gift of a beneficent French, Spanish or American establishment. Hardly. It emerged instead from the lower orders. Frequently rulers tried to constrain the festival and sensuous celebrations that encouraged intermingling of bodies and cultures. The French tried to put a halt to the bawdy, unrestrained dance halls; the Spanish tried to restrain the barroom gatherings of black slaves and free whites. And the new American owners and their successors would always be horrified by the way the lower classes — black and white — carried on in the city.

The new American paper, the *Picayune*, scorned Mardi Gras as a "miserable annual celebration," dismissed the costumes of the revelers as "outlandish and grotesque," and frowned upon the "riffraff" that followed in the wake of the parades. This nineteenth century reaction did not differ much from the disgust that the same paper declared in the early twentieth century when it condemned "jass," the new artistic expression born of the mingling of musical tastes of Southern Negroes, Creole Blacks, Germans and Sicilians.

Ordinary people — black and white — created our public culture. They came from varied ethnic backgrounds — not only the multitude of Europeans from Ireland, Germany, Italy, France, and Spain; but also the varied Black people from West Africa, Haiti, Belize, Virginia, and South Carolina. The blending, of course, still goes on. Greek festivals, Filipino social clubs, Hondouran restaurants, Vietnamese shops, and Mississippi Black churches — all continue to alter and enrich the public culture. The end of segregation, the restoration of old houses and neighborhoods, and a new experimentation with our cuisine — all promise a renewed celebration of our central unifying culture. Just a walk through a recent rendition of the Jazz and Heritage Festival at the Fair Grounds still demonstrates the wonders of commingling in this magnificent city.

The vitality of our public culture should not, however, disguise the massive assaults directed against it from both within and without. Culture is a fragile creation; it takes decades to nurture a way of life, but mindless neglect or determined effort can quickly crush its flowering.

In the years around World War I, the culture took a heavy beating from a "progressive" generation of business and political promoters. The war cut off European immigration, especially the important exchange of French-speaking artists and musicians who had regularly renewed the city's high, non-Anglo culture; and the destruction of the French Opera House in 1919 ended the major reason for reopening the connection. Worse still was an internal assault leading to the simultaneous imposition of a more rigid code of racial segregation, the closure of bars and gambling houses, and the creation of a new sort of residential development in the city. Real estate promotion, perhaps more than any other business activity, shows the mind-set of the leading members of the city's narrow-minded elite. In the early twentieth century they began to expand and alter the physical patterns of living and working in New Orleans with both an open contempt for the past and also an advertised admira-

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tion for other areas of the country.

The developers of Lakeside, for example, in 1908 promised to build the "New York of the South." In a fancy brochure, they pictured decaying edifices of the French Quarter juxtaposed to new box-like, wooden buildings of the newer developments. "The old French style of architecture," they crowed, "which is fast becoming obsolete . . . is now looked upon as a relic of antiquity." These promoters announced that they were bringing about "the awakening of New Orleans." Their motto was simple and self assured: "Tear down the old and make way for the new."

This thinking got worse after World War I. In the 1920s, similar promoters planned to fashion a "Little California" in the far reaches of Gentilly. "It has often been noted," they claimed, "by strangers visiting New Orleans that . . . there is a lack of beautiful residential districts here which are so common to the Golden West." The developers fashioned special deeds to insure that old New Orleans would never serve as a model for Gentilly. They required all homes to have large front yards without any fences or walls more than six feet high, and they set a minimum price for each house to exclude any residents not in the middle class. To keep "a Chinaman" from building "a laundry shack on the corner next to your home," the promoters also segregated all businesses within a few special sites. And finally they made each purchaser sign a contract that forbid him and his heirs from ever leasing or selling his home to a black person.

The creation of isolated white, middle class residential areas transformed large areas of the city and purged from them the forces that had created the unifying central culture of New Orleans. Even fifty years later these areas are still devoid of good restaurants, intermingling of people, and any sense of communal celebration. The same sentiment that led to the construction of lily white neighborhoods continues to express itself in the suburban movement after World War II. Only an occasional restaurant sign could alert visitors in many sections of Jefferson Parish that they were not in Des Moines or San Diego. The shifting of the area's population to the suburbs has also begun to produce the terrifying donut-shape of racial polarity found in other American cities: a black populated ghetto surrounded by a white circle of prosperity. Such a setting will not perpetuate the culture of New Orleans.

To remain New Orleanians, we must be alert and protective. We cannot recreate the culture of Italy, West Africa, France, Ireland, or Cuba; but we can try to protect the culture that has given meaning to our lives. Only that culture, moreover, will be able to develop bonds of association and commonality among ourselves, the descendants of a *mélange* of ancestors from almost every part of the globe.

It pays to learn of our old world backgrounds, but that knowledge should not turn us away from our present dilemmas or our common futures. I am certainly proud of my Slavic heritage; I am only saddened to see that in most areas of America it has dissipated before it could invigorate and embellish a new, living culture in America. In New Orleans, we can all be proud that ordinary people of different national and racial backgrounds created a new culture that allows us to share a rich, common experience full of joy and meaning. We are lucky that we can all become New Orleanians.



A Neighborhood Scene in Central City
 Photo: Andrew Jackson Pickett, IV

— Ethnicity and Neo-Ethnicity
 by
 Joseph V. Guillotte, III

A few months ago, my good friend, the U.S. historian James H. Dorman, called my attention to the phenomenon of neo-ethnicity in his essay "*Ethnos Reconsidered: An Essay at the Ordering of Conceptual Chaos.*" In recent years some social scientists have challenged some popular ideas about ethnic groups in America. Rather than this being a country of ethnic homogenization as is implied in the "melting pot" sentiment, some have suggested that there are such groups as "unmeltable ethnics." Ethnicity is not to be written off in a facile manner. It might slumber for decades or even centuries, then be revitalized. Essentially such revitalization, neo-ethnicity, or ethnic resurgence as it has been variously called, has been extolled and criticised. (Specially, neo-ethnicity applies to Irish-Catholics, Italian-Americans, or Michael Novak's more inclusive PIGS — Poles, Italians, Greeks and Slavs.) Proponents of

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the new ethnicity argue that the affirmation of ethnicity and group solidarity for social, cultural, political, and economic reasons is a healthy and useful phenomenon. Such white "ethnic" Americans were formerly overlooked and largely ignored by government and society. Advocates of such ethnic revival believe that these people should assert their potential group power and at the same time enjoy the beauty of their cultural traditions. In addition to carrying the benefits of block voting and economic pressure, such proponents further argue, the new ethnic consciousness offers a sense of security, identity, and self-worth. Such a reawakening emphasizes the pluralistic nature of American society and reaffirms the societal value of ethnic group particularism.

The opposition to the neo-ethnic movement, writers such as Orlando Patterson, Howard F. Stein, and Robert F. Hill, insist that neo-ethnicity is just another manifestation of ethnic solidarity at its worst, since they find it to be based on the antipathy of lower-middle class whites to the achievements of other, usually non-white, minority groups in the late 1960's. These achievements are believed by the neo-ethnics to have come at their expense. Critics see the whole neo-ethnic movement to be at best a form of exaltation of a contrived bond of union among people who share little that is meaningful other than a romantic, idealized sense of fictional historical experience. Such pseudo-ethnics, in the words of Howard Stein and Robert Hill, create a "mystical womb of ethnos" to provide "salve for modern wounds of violated and vulnerable identities." They see neo-ethnicity as having little to do with actual ties to the past, or traditions, or place of origin, or language. The cultural stuff of their ethnic emergence is seen as bogus. The opponents of neo-ethnicity contend that though actual ethnic values, beliefs, or personalities did exist in earlier generations of all ethnic groups, this true ethnicity was irretrievably lost in the synthesis of the American experience. The supposed ethnic manifestations of recent years cannot be "primordial" or "aboriginal" because they are essentially fakes, mere play-acting at ethnicity. Neo-ethnicity is just an imitation of the real thing which has been brought about by a sense of rage and frustration at the success of other minorities. The neo-ethnics represent a threat to the highest ideals of the American creed: individualism, egalitarianism, and progress. The opponents of neo-ethnicity thus deny its validity due to the absence of true primordial qualities.

Such a controversy as outlined above can lead us to an impasse unless we have in mind a firm definition of ethnicity and an understanding of some of its functions. In this essay I want to discuss a definition of ethnicity, some of the economic, political, and aesthetic functions of such a concept, and a proposal that neo-ethnicity is a rather natural phenomenon that marks a particular stage in the evolution of an ethnic group.

I looked at the first ten introductory cultural anthropology textbooks on my shelf. Seven of the ten did not have a definition for ethnic group. One defined the adjective "ethnic." Two dealt with the concept rather summarily. The reason for this scant attention to the term "ethnic," I believe, is not due to lack of anthropological interest in the matter. Rather, it seems to me that it has the aspect of a primitive concept, one so basic that generally no definition is deemed necessary. I believe that this is shortsighted. If anthropologists are to maintain their expertise in the study of small

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groups, they must initially be able to define a type of group that they commonly analyze.

At rock bottom we are dealing with a group of people. In the context of our discussion we are dealing with people in a plural society. In other words, the United States is a nation-state, a political entity whose population is composed of scores of regional and sub-cultural groups. Sometimes these groups are identified or partly defined by the type of space that they occupy, such as Ninth Warder or Southerner. Sometimes they are defined by what they have in common in terms of religious, economic, and ancestral common denominators. In other words, we all have several identities that overlap with various groups. One can be an American, a Mason, a Protestant, a member of the middle class, a Rotarian, and an Anglo-Saxon. The problem at hand in any discussion of ethnicity is to factor out which one of these overlapping identities pertains to *ethnos*, which is Greek for "the people" or "us." Such factoring is not so easy in the American context. It probably never was easy in any context, whether industrial nation-state or "primitive" tribal society. At certain times humans will fiercely maintain their allegiance to a particular group; at other times they will underemphasize or even denigrate their membership in such a group. Many times this vacillation in allegiance pertains to marriage. As a consequence of marrying across ethnic boundaries, a process of creolization occurs over time. That is, there develops a blending of cultures as well as genes. In "Creolization and Ethnicity," an essay in *New Orleans Ethnic Cultures*, I used genealogical data to demonstrate how multiplex were the ethnic strains in our backgrounds.

So, if blending and creolization is often occurring in a plural society, does this mean that the opponents of neo-ethnicity are correct in asserting such movements are phony? I believe not if we start off with a definition of ethnicity that is appropriate to societies such as our own as well as simpler ones. I have found the following definition of "ethnic group" to be practical for research in East Africa as well as in the United States. An ethnic group is a population whose members, at certain times, emphasize their loyalty to each other. This loyalty is often stated to be based upon certain values or symbols as well as imputed blood relationship. So, the question properly put, is not "what is an ethnic group?" but "when is an ethnic group?" This situational aspect of ethnicity is one that has been emphasized in recent years by social scientists. Such an aspect certainly has its drawbacks, but it does seem a reasonable approach with which to handle such a concept in a multiethnic society such as our own. Another way of putting the concept of ethnicity in recent years is that ethnicity is an awareness of a potential support group to identify with in time of perceived danger. Thus I maintain that it is not surprising that groups of people that have rather tenuous ancestral and cultural relationships suddenly seize upon these relationships when they are threatened or believe that they are. No doubt such mobilization is spurred on in many cases by racism and bigotry. If these groups are not primordial or aboriginal, then neither are the groups that they are reacting against primordial or aboriginal. For example, Africans from scores of different linguistic, political and cultural groups were brutally transported to the New World. Through common suffering, exploitation, and pain they became formed into an Afro-American ethnic group. Variegated as Afro-Americans are in their individual experiences, there are situations

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when they forget these differences and feel solidarity with their "brothers" and "sisters." I would go so far as to say that whenever members of a group use a kinship term to address another who is really not a kinsman, more often than not they are involved in ethnic awareness. Members of Catholic religious orders, labor unions, and Fundamentalist Protestant congregations are exceptions, but these people are also trying to exploit the metaphor of kinship to establish a solidarity that is similar to ethnicity. Another process similar to the Afro-American is that of the Chicanos. In Mexico, their forbears were members of different cultural groups. When they arrived in southern California, the cultural heterogeneity of the past was forgotten momentarily at the expense of emphasis upon common Mexican, Spanish-speaking denominators.

Afro-Americans and Chicanos are examples of new ethnic groups being formed in the U.S. The same could be said for the neo-ethnics. In Europe, Italy for example, regional differences were paramount. When immigrants arrived here, they gradually lost sight of regional differences to fix upon a common Italian identity. Such American magazines as *I Am* or *Attenzione* have been attempting to make some profit from this by appealing to what they see as a "natural" market. An example closer to home is the case of several of my Cuban students at the University of New Orleans. Their genealogies show that their grandparents came from Spain at the end of the 19th century. While in Spain they specifically identified with a particular region such as Extremadura, Valencia or Galicia. However, when they arrived in Cuba, they emphasized their general Iberian background and took on the identity of "Spanish" to differentiate themselves from "Cubans" whose ancestors immigrated some time in the past. As Spaniards, they intermarried and saw themselves as different from Cubans. It was not until they came to the United States in the 1950's and 1960's that they began to identify themselves as Cuban.

From these few examples we might generalize that ethnic awareness is a rather chimerical thing. Sometimes you see it, sometimes you don't. Sometimes a place and time, which were in actuality pretty awful, are seen in hazy retrospect as being the promised land and the good old days. Sentimentality, fuzzymindedness, and emotionality are the order of ethnic awareness rather than exception. These examples also imply that humans are quite capable of, indeed might even revel in, expanding and contracting the boundaries of their ethnic groups as is seen to be necessary.

I believe that the "white ethnics" or neo-ethnicity phenomenon might be understood in terms of action and reaction. It is almost a social law, that, a) given a society which is composed of several *potential* ethnic groups, b) let one of them realize its potential and mobilize, revitalize or whatever; then, c) there will inevitably occur a reaction on the part of others. They will quickly fabricate reasons to mass in what they believe to be a defensive formation. Some of these reasons will be based upon ethnic explanations.

There are political and economic overtones to all of this. Ulf Hannerz, in an article titled "Ethnicity and Opportunity in Urban America," developed the concept of adaptive strategies to analyze how different ethnic populations compete in American cities. He suggests three such strategies:

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1. **Ethnic Dominance:** Where ethnic groups monopolize certain activities or occupations as avenues for social mobility. Here in New Orleans, black people were politically disfranchised but they were still able to take over certain occupations such as plastering, cement finishing, bricklaying, and a majority of the longshoremen's jobs on the riverfront. Italians in the produce business and Gypsies are other examples of such ethnic occupational specialization.

2. **Ethnic Entrepreneurship:** Where individuals exploit their ethnicity to gain clients or make commercial connections.

3. **Ethnic Brokerage:** Where individuals use common ethnicity to mobilize political followings, work groups, or voluntary associations. American urban politicians have always been sensitive to this in "balancing a ticket" and distributing patronage.

Hannerz's article does not deal with the specific urban conditions under which one or another of these strategies may be promoted. No doubt the particular historic and demographic pattern of a given American city will determine in large measure the adaptive strategy pursued by any ethnic population. Specific patterns have also had an effect on whether or not there will be any neo-ethnic reaction. I believe that this area of occupation assignment deserves further research in the local context. Yugoslavs in the oyster and seafood restaurant businesses and Blacks in the above-mentioned building trades are examples of such economic monopolization by New Orleans ethnic groups.

If we examine these strategies of ethnic groups, we see that they have become methods of economic assimilation and upward mobility. Assimilation can also be cultural. Such assimilation might naively be thought to knell the demise of an ethnic group. I think that we can only say that it signals the end of a certain stage of evolution of the ethnic group in question. Stimulation, either from others or from within, can bring about a reemergence of the group. This reemergence cannot be expected to conform to such "primordial" stages as Sicilian village life or West African tribal society. Critics of neo-ethnicity point out the ludicrous aspect of this when it is emphasized over more practical matters. We can only expect that these earlier periods of ethnic history will be emphasized, mythologized, and serve as a point of departure for other stages of ethnic evolution. For like biological species, ethnic groups do change their forms and organizations to adapt to different social demands. Cultural assimilation might be seen as necessary protective coloration or camouflage with which to preserve the group in trying times.

The pervasiveness and continuity of the ethnic group over time seems to indicate that such a type of organization has great appeal for humans. The nation-state has certainly not supplanted it. International organizations such as the United Nations assuredly have had little effect upon ethnic vitality. Intraethnic conflict and stress might bring about change and adaptation but definitely not extinction. I have mentioned that one reason for the perpetuation of ethnic identity is its economic function. However, this alone does not explain all of the cases of ethnic survival. There also seems to be something like an aesthetic appeal of ethnicity, since many ethnic symbols merge with the artistic realm. Literature, music, dance, cuisine, religion, textiles and tailoring, all emphasize and romanticize the possibility of ethnic belonging. Ethnic symbols are embedded in these connotative communications and in subtle

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and overt ways reinforce our awareness of ethnic matters.

In closing, I stress that neo-ethnicity is really not anything new. As nation-states and empires expanded and dissolved, their ethnic constituents submerged and stressed their identities. Neo-ethnicity might be petty, bigoted, racist, and nasty to outsiders, but it is also very human if not humane. It offers solace and support to people in times of uncertainty. To avoid its abuses, all members of potential ethnic groups must be vigilant and be prepared to exert pressure through the bureaucracy and government to restrain and contain any exploitative and violent emergence of a specific ethnic group. Ethnic groups, in essence, must police each other. Political sophistication keeps ethnic groups in a state of potential mobilization so that their interests can be protected. Chains of such mobilization ultimately act as a levelling mechanism to keep down any one group from too long a period of dominance. Ethnic mobilization can be seen as a form of maneuvering of groups and individuals. We should remember as well, however, that ethnic mobilization and awareness is not going on all the time. Much of the time we do not think of ourselves as ethnics. We have other roles to play and other fields in which to maneuver as individuals and groups.



*Mr. Teddy Tsavellas preparing Greeks souvlakia
(shish-ka-boō) for the annual Greek Festival*

The Hellenic Nativistic
Revitalization Movement
in New Orleans, Louisiana
by
Ethelyn Orso

Among the social sciences in the United States of America, anthropology inherited the task of studying the native or aboriginal peoples of the world ("primitives," "pre-literates," Amerindians, etc.). American anthropology was fathered by Professor Franz Boas who brought the discipline to a scientific status and encouraged his students to engage in fieldwork involving participant observation in order to study these native peoples accurately. Much of the work done under Boas' direction involved observing, collecting, and cataloging of elements of culture and patterns of behavior for the preservation of information on aboriginal societies on the verge of extinction or acculturation. Acculturation is the process whereby entire native cultures became westernized and adopted the white European culture as much as was possible. The Amerindians in the United States were part of the "melting-pot syn-

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drome," for many of the innumerable tribes Americanized in order to continue some sort of existence.

Many tribes also experienced social upheavals, termed "nativistic movements," which were one important response to acculturation. These movements were so significant that Professor Ralph Linton was asked by the American Anthropological Association in 1943 to prepare a thorough study on nativistic movements in North America. Realizing that a systematic study of the phenomena in general was needed, Linton expanded the scope of his project and produced the first major theoretical statement on the subject. Most central to my topic is his definition of a nativistic movement as "Any conscious, organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture" (Linton 1943: 231). Linton was drawing attention to particular types of culture change, those that are *conscious* and *organized* movements that arise only when a society becomes aware that its own culture is threatened with the loss of its existence. His definition also draws attention to the fact that such movements only attempt to revive or perpetuate *selected aspects* of the previous culture. These elements may either be current at the time of the beginning of the movement, or may only be remembered. The more distinctive the elements are with regard to other cultures with which the society is in contact, the greater their potential value as symbols of the society's unique character.

By 1961, Professor Anthony Wallace expanded Linton's original research on nativism and included such movements within a much broader category of phenomena which he labelled "revitalization movements." Using information on a wide variety of societies, both literate and pre-literate, Wallace demonstrated that the revitalization process was of utmost significance in human history and indeed was responsible for the success of Christianity and other major world religions (Wallace 1961: 1966). Since the end of the World War II, there have been significant revitalization movements in the United States (in other terms, reversals of the so-called melting-pot syndrome). The first such movement of this kind to receive attention and achieve partial success was the Black movement, which fits Wallace's description of a revitalization movement very well in certain respects. For example, Wallace emphasized the need for a successful prophet-leader or group of leaders to lead the movement through the many stages it must undergo to become a success. Martin Luther King became a martyred prophet-leader (just as Christ had been), and the movement now continues under a number of independent leaders such as Muhammad Ali and the Reverend Jesse Jackson.

Since the 1960s, we have been experiencing a flood of movements in the United States that have been labelled "ethnic awareness movements" by social scientists because they primarily involve national groups. These movements are best understood as nativistic movements that involve both religious and secular elements, but do not necessarily have a prophet-leader or a religious focus.

This paper will describe some aspects of the Hellenic movement of the past ten years in New Orleans. This movement is gaining visibility every year, especially with the present construction of a large community center and church at the corner of Robert E. Lee Boulevard and St. Bernard Avenue, on the banks of historic Bayou St.

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John and almost within view of Lake Pontchartrain. According to the Curtis and Davis survey, this site is located in the Filmore neighborhood and is considered "standard." This means that the neighborhood is basically white, the average family income is \$8,000 and over, and owner occupancy is over forty-one percent. The previous site of the Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral, the "oldest Orthodox church in North America," was located in the Sixth Ward, on Dorgenois Street, a "severe" neighborhood becoming increasingly Black with owner occupancy between 16 and 41 percent and average family income under \$8,000 per year (Curtis and Davis 1974:9,13).

The recent history of the New Orleans Hellenic movement can best be understood using Linton's original definition of nativism and adding ideas borrowed from Wallace and Professor Munro Edmonson (Edmonson 1960). As Edmonson noted, the element of ethnocentrism is a vital key to the beginning and continuation of a successful movement, and groups that do not possess a strong national or religious ethnocentrism (or both, as in the case of the Hellenes) are less likely to develop ethnic awareness movements.

According to this new definition, nativism is the (1) explicit and self-conscious phase of (2) an underlying pattern of ethnocentrism, that is manifested by (3) deliberate, organized attempts by some members of a society to (4) revive and perpetuate selected aspects of its culture so as to (5) construct a more satisfying society.

The new definition has been subdivided into five sections. Each section will be elaborated upon using data on the local Hellenic movement. This information was gathered by the standard anthropological techniques of participant observation and structured interviewing (both formal and informal). The information was primarily gathered during the past eight months, although the participant observation goes back for several years. Information placed in quotation marks has been taken directly from key informants, but may not be totally accurate. The informants will remain anonymous, but they must include most of the major figures of the movement.

(1) EXPLICIT AND SELF-CONSCIOUS PHASE

New Orleans has a long history, and most of it involves shipping and, therefore, Greeks. Nicholas Benachis, a cotton merchant of great wealth and a man of Hellenic background and Orthodox faith, began the idea of an Orthodox chapel in New Orleans to benefit the few resident Orthodox Christians and the visiting Orthodox sea captains and officers. This Orthodox mission in the New World was dedicated in 1866, although a chapel had been donated by Benachis since the 1840s. The Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral traces its roots to the Benachis mission, and claims to be the oldest Orthodox Church in America. However, the church has changed its focus considerably since its inception, becoming primarily "Greek" (non-Greeks were not encouraged to maintain membership and have formed a separate St. Basil Orthodox Church). The church still maintains some involvement with visiting and resident Greek sea captains and officers, but takes little or no interest in the working-class Greek seamen who visit the city in large numbers. From its inception, the church has been maintained by the wealthier and better educated class of Orthodox Christians in the city, many of whom were of Greek origin.

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The majority of Greeks who migrated to New Orleans struggled to become successful business entrepreneurs and to "melt" into the suburbs of New Orleans where they could afford the affluent houses and enjoy the serene and beautiful characteristics of "standard" New Orleans neighborhoods. Since the Greek-Americans are scattered about the city and they have not continued to live in the environment of the church in the Sixth Ward, they have had difficulties in maintaining their language and their culture. The majority of second and third generation Greeks in New Orleans do not speak modern (*dhimotic*) Greek fluently, and the majority of the local Greeks communicate in English with their children and their neighbors, who are primarily non-Greek. Becoming competent in English has facilitated the social and economic advances of these families, but it troubled many older Greeks that their children were not maintaining their native language and were not happy to go to the Greek language school located at the church on Dorgenois Street. In fact, "the children did not like going to the church at all because the neighborhood in which it was located had become so dilapidated." Something had to be done to encourage pride in the traditional Greek values and enthusiasm for learning to read and speak Greek (both of which are necessary for an understanding of the Orthodox mass and other religious ceremonies held in the New Orleans Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral). Unlike many other Orthodox congregations in the United States that have voted to adopt English in all church services, the New Orleans congregation at Holy Trinity has stubbornly insisted on maintaining Greek in its church services. Retention of Greek in both religious and secular areas will guarantee a strong sense of ethnic identity for the Greeks involved in the New Orleans Hellenic movement.

"Ten years ago" the first annual Greek Night was held in the community center of the Holy Trinity Cathedral on Dorgenois Street. Evidently it was such a success that not all of the people who wanted to attend could be accommodated, and so the Greek Night was moved to the Saxony on Canal Street for one year, and then to one of the larger ballrooms of the Rivergate Complex on Canal Street where last year approximately 15,000 people attended. Two locally successful Greek businessmen take credit for originating Greek Night in New Orleans, but the idea was already present in other American cities such as Houston, where prosperous Greeks reside.

Greek Night involves an explicit and self-conscious phase of Greek-Americans demonstrating their values in their customs, foods, dances, traditional costumes, and the like to their American friends. "We wanted the 200 active Greek-Americans to each bring five 'American' friends so the 'Americans' could meet us and we could meet them. We wanted the 'Americans' to know what we eat, how we eat, how and what we drink, how we express ourselves in our dances. The idea was for 'Americans' to learn about the Greeks (in the city) — what kind of people they are. Like our dances . . . do they relate directly to sex (as some American dancing does) or is it like a rooster?" (The *zeybekiko* or solo Greek dance allows the Greek male to express his machismo.)

Greek Night, held annually in the fall, is a benefit for the Holy Trinity Church, and the tickets are expensive for many people. Because of this, many of the less successful Greek-Americans are unable to attend and to bring their large families. For this reason and others, seven years ago the Greek Festival was begun. This was

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also designed to benefit the church and to consciously and openly promote Greek values and Greek food, wine, dance, clothing and the like, but this time in an informal indoor/outdoor setting that could be afforded by the masses. Although this festival (which is always held in the spring) lasts longer (three days), takes considerably more work and energy, and nets less money than does Greek Night, it is an important part of maintaining a year-round calendar cycle of public Hellenic rituals that are the more visible part of the Hellenic movement.

These two public events are only considered successful if "the 'Americans' who come are able to enjoy themselves in our style and see that what the Greeks do, they do well." Monetary concerns are in second place, and indeed the approximately \$30,000 netted annually for the church is only a drop in the bucket in terms of the expenses involved in moving the Orthodox church to its new location, which is also an important part of the Hellenic movement.

The "Americans" who attend these public rituals enjoy themselves and the food, the music, the dance, and the wine. The Greek-Americans and Greeks who donate their time, food, and hard work are able to see that these elements of Greek culture are valuable because not only do the Americans come and enjoy, but they also pay for the privilege. The reinforcement of these chosen Greek values both by formal acceptance by the "Americans" and by monetary profits evidently is sufficient to maintain the inspiration of the people who work so hard to make these events a success.

"Some "Americans" are converted to Hellenophiles by these celebrations and adopt Greek customs and values.

(2) AN UNDERLYING PATTERN OF ETHNOCENTRISM

Although ethnocentrism is universal, it is found in different degrees of intensity in different national and ethnic groups. Greeks have been very ethnocentric since the time of Herotodus, and still consider non-Greeks "barbarians." (That even includes some of the "Americans" who attend Greek Night and the Hellenic Festival.)

Since Greek-American children living in the suburbs were not learning Greek, were not necessarily marrying Greek, and were not happy about attending the Greek church, they were not sharing with their parents and grandparents the proper amount of Greek ethnocentrism. The two yearly Hellenic rituals allow these young Greeks to bring their "American" friends and to be proud of how good the food is, the wine is, etc., and how well-managed the events are. Hopefully, the Hellenic movement is encouraging the younger Greeks to study their native language and take pride in their heritage and to become more ethnocentric vis-à-vis their ancestral culture.

(3) DELIBERATE, ORGANIZED ATTEMPTS BY SOME MEMBERS OF A SOCIETY

Only a small percentage of the approximately 2,000 Greek and Greek-Americans in the vicinity of New Orleans are actively involved in the work of the Hellenic movement, but all of them benefit from the movement in one way or another. Perhaps one hundred families donate either work or time, or food and beverages, or other items and talents to the two public events. The current president of the church, Dennis

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Georges, together with George Zisis, organized the first Greek Night, and these two men continue to organize and promote the two events.

Georges is a highly successful businessman and a visionary. He was one of the prime forces in relocating the church, against many opponents armed with many reasons. "Throughout our history, we have had many struggles to maintain our culture. Sometimes our ancestors had to live in isolation on bare mountaintops as bandits (against Turks, Germans, etc.) to preserve Greek culture. They had nothing — no wealth, no education, no comforts, but they had dreams. And they survived on those dreams, and today Greece and Greek culture are alive. If we had stayed in the old church we couldn't have built our dreams. The neighborhood was deteriorating, there was nothing spectacular about the architecture of the church which was too small, we didn't have a beautiful open panorama like we have on Bayou St. John to gaze upon and to let our dreams fly, to soar to their heights. But if you want to have your dreams come true, you have to spend money. Sure, we're deep in debt to relocate the church. But if you want to make Greek soup, you have to break some eggs. And if you want to go fishing, you have to get your ass wet" (Greek proverbial sayings).

Thus, the Hellenic movement was the deliberate attempt by Georges, Zisis, and many other Greeks and their families to improve the quality of Greek-American culture for the entire community. This includes such intangibles as acceptance and approval by the "Americans" and such tangibles as a steady contribution to the church fund.

(4) REVIVE AND PERPETUATE SELECTED ASPECTS OF ITS CULTURE

New Orleans is a city full of "Americans" who are obsessed with "good" food and drink. The old saying was that there was a Catholic church on every corner, right across the street from the barroom. New Orleanians pride themselves on their sybaritic and gourmet natures. The food and drink chosen by the Greeks is both distinctive and good, so there is seldom room for complaint even from the pickiest self-styled New Orleans gourmet. The Greek Bouzoukia music, which is really not Greek at all, is certainly different and sensual, as are the Greek folk dances performed and taught to the "Americans" upon request. Greek pastries are rich and delicious and quite different from the French or Italian pastries with which New Orleanians usually stuff themselves.

No nativistic movement is able to revive and perpetuate the complete ancestral culture, and so the selection of the elements that are to be used and which will assume symbolic value is crucial. By choosing good food, wine and ouzo, singing and dancing and music in a city which is said to be "always for pleasure," the leaders of the movement chose well. They knew that they could only perpetuate their subculture with the approval of the "Americans." The lack of understanding of this important factor has caused the decline or end of many other nativistic movements.

(5) CONSTRUCT A MORE SATISFYING SOCIETY

Greek-American culture is a hybrid as are all such similar subcultures in the United States. As a hybrid it contains many "American" elements. Many of these elements are openly ridiculed in Greece. After the people from the island of Chios (pro-

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nounced *he-os*), Greek-Americans are the second major category of Greek people who receive intergroup slurs from native Greeks (Orso 1979).

The fact that Greek-Americans are neither really Greek nor totally "American" (whatever that means) is not important. Their culture inevitably must represent a blend of different elements. The dangerous trend toward losing the Greek language and pride in Greek heritage, toward melting completely into a rootless "American Pie" situation, was stopped for the time being, at least, by the local Hellenic movement. Even if most Greek-Americans do not know how to speak Greek, they will be able to maintain an ethnic identity for themselves and their children through the help of the public rituals. The other, less visible aspects of the Hellenic movement, will also help to provide the inspiration for the movement to continue.

The anticipated completion of the Hellenic Cultural Center (their name for the community center) by the end of 1979 will provide many important functions. It will be a temporary place of worship until the new cathedral is completed, a task of many years at least. The center will be used to cook food for the Festival and other public rituals. It will also provide a place for dance, sports, theatre, movies, lectures, and study. The Greek language school for the children of the Church's members will be located there. The new Hellenic Cultural Society, an outgrowth of a Committee on Ethnicity in New Orleans project, will be able to have permanent facilities for their activities that will include Greek poetry, art, drama, film, and the scholarly study of other areas of Greek civilization, past and present.

The movement appears to be a success. "ZITO ELLADA!" (Glory to Greece!)

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Father William G. Gaines



*Dancing in Greek Bar on
Decatur Street*

Photos: J.C. Pierce

**Odysseus in Louisiana:
The Greek Sailors in New Orleans
by
Andrew Horton**

his new-built vessel creaked and longed to sail — so might
his soul one day flee scaffolds of wife, son, and country.

Odysseus in Nikos Kazantzakis'

Odyssey: A Modern Sequel, trans. by Kimon Friar

June 10th, 1979, was a muggy Sunday in New Orleans. But in the air-conditioned comfort of a large rebuilt red-brick building in the lower end of the French Quarter, more than a hundred Greeks and Greek-Americans from the New Orleans area could forget the heat temporarily and concentrate on the Greek Orthodox service being held within a small chapel. The occasion? The dedication of the Saint Nicholas Maritime Center for Greek Seamen under the directorship of Father William G.

Odysseus in Louisiana: Greek Sailors in New Orleans

Gaines. Housed within the Catholic Church's Stella Maris Maritime Center on the corner of Chartres and Governor Nicholls Streets, the Greek Center represents a step forward for concerned New Orleanian Greeks who wish to be of help to the roughly 30,000 Greek sailors who pass through the city each year. "A great work begins today," proclaimed Orthodox Bishop Iakovos Pillilis in Greek during the ceremony, "and it will continue in New Orleans for our sailors, I strongly believe."

Traditionally, however, the Greeks (Greek-born and Greek-American) of New Orleans have had little contact with the transient Greeks. Partly this gap between the two groups can be explained by practical realities: many Greeks in New Orleans work hard at their jobs in business and the professions and prefer to spend free time with their families and relatives. In addition, sailors are here today and gone, if not tomorrow, certainly within a few days with little opportunity to form lasting friendships and with almost no opportunities to meet resident Greeks. That the new Hellenic Center is even further away from the port than the former church means that it is now harder than ever for sailors to reach it.

Coupled with these realities is a general *attitude* on the part of resident Greeks toward Greek sailors. On the one hand, many of the Greeks in New Orleans come from villages and lower middle class or working class families in Greece, and have had neither the benefit of much education beyond the secondary school level nor been inclined to join cultural, political, philanthropic or social action organizations. In this sense the lack of a community concern for Hellenic sailors (Hellenic includes Greeks born in any country) is simply part of a general lack of participation in community organizations. On the other hand, many resident Greeks have a negative view of Greek sailors as undesirable transients better left alone. Such an attitude is actually part of a general feeling settled immigrant groups of many nationalities have towards those who are not "American." To other Americans it is common for naturalized Greek-Americans to speak of their Greek heritage, but to outside Greeks such as sailors, they will emphasize their *American* status. As Father Gaines expressed in his remarks during the dedication service, earlier appeals for bridging the gap between the residents and sailors "fell on deaf ears."

The Maritime Center is a *cautious* start. It can aid Greek sailors and help motivate the resident Greek community to participate more fully in helping fellow Greeks. But as those involved have made clear, it is only a beginning. I wish to explore this topic more fully by looking at the Greek sailors themselves, at what attracts them to New Orleans, and finally at the Maritime Center as a possible point of contact between the two Greek populations.

Greek Sailors Today

The Greek Merchant Marine is the largest in the world. It is not surprising, therefore, that over a thousand Greek-registered ships dock in New Orleans, America's second largest port, each year. Since many Greek ships carry more than fifty percent Greek crews by policy and must, by Greek law, include at least thirty percent, this means that roughly 20,000 Greek sailors reach New Orleans in a year.

But to this figure must be added those Greeks that sail on Greek ships sailing

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under foreign flags. In the past other countries, Liberia, for instance, have been convenient "Greek" shipping centers because of relaxed regulations and lucrative tax breaks. "Liberian" shipping corporations located at non-existent addresses in the capital city of Monrovia, but actually owned and operated from Piraeus, London or New York by wealthy Greek ship owners, hire thousands of Greek crew members for their world-wide voyages. While there are no statistics on the exact number of Greeks on "non-Greek" ships arriving in New Orleans, it seems safe to estimate such a population at 5,000-10,000, bringing the total number of Hellenic sailors in Louisiana each year to well over 20,000.

Who are the Greek sailors today? Everyone I interviewed — captains, shipping officials, sailors, etc. — agreed that the Greek sailor today is not the same kind of AB (Able Bodied Seaman) who sailed the seas twenty or even ten years ago. Greece has always been a nation of sailors. Cursed with rugged mountains and rocky terrain, and blessed with hundreds of islands, the Greeks have been a major shipping power since pre-Homeric times. Traditionally shipowners and sailors come from the islands, and traditionally the home island of the owner determined the make-up of his crew. Islands such as Andros, Chios, Hydra, and Lesvos, though small in population, have nevertheless produced shipping empires whose wealth and tonnage surpass that of most countries. Furthermore, until recent times, being a sailor was a viable and lucrative way for a young, basically uneducated, islander to support himself and a family (and most were married) in an economy with extremely limited possibilities at home. These sailors were, for the most part, sailors for life, taking pride in their profession.

Such sailors still exist. But for a variety of reasons there is an ever-increasing percentage of younger, less-experienced, less serious-minded, non-family oriented sailors who have signed up for an "adventure" for a few years before trying something else. *Tihodiotis* ("luck-chasers") they are called. No longer do they necessarily come from the islands. In fact, it is common to find sailors from Athens, and from inland mountain villages where the sea has never been an integral part of their culture.

The basic change has been brought about by economic developments. Island economies have improved, and the young man who would have set sail ten years ago now finds he can make almost as much money at home and thus be able to live with his family.

While the general Greek economic condition has improved steadily despite inflation, benefits for Greek sailors have not kept pace. An AB makes roughly \$500 a month on a Greek ship, and a second mate about \$1,000, while it is not uncommon for a Greek worker in Greece to make about \$400 or more a month. Financially, therefore, considering the kind of work performed by an AB, the incentive to sail has declined.

The "new" Greek sailors are also younger than their traditional counterparts. If twenty years ago most sailors were in the 30-50-year-old category, today they are predominantly in the 18-30 group. On a recent flight from New York to New Orleans (sailors are frequently flown from one port to another to join a ship), I was interested to see that in a group of ten Greek sailors I met, three were fifteen years old and younger. Despite the changing attitudes of Greek sailors, however, it appears that

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the majority still send much of their salary home to relatives, though fewer are married than in the past. Yet many I spoke with added that sailing was an "escape," an adventure for them; it was an opportunity to leave the boredom of traditional village life.

I opened the essay with a quotation from Nikos Kazantzakis' modern sequel to Homer's *Odyssey*. Kazantzakis' contemporary-spirited Odysseus leaves Ithaka after he has returned to faithful Penelope and murdered the suitors in his home with the assistance of his son Telemachus. In Homer's epic Odysseus was a home-being who resisted leaving Ithaka for Troy. But in Kazantzakis' version, modern Odysseus, like many of the new Greek sailors, chose to leave because he was bored with domestic life and wished to taste the salty air of new adventures once again.

New Orleans

Greek seamen I have interviewed are unanimous in listing New Orleans as their favorite American city. They like the climate, the moderate size of the city (New York is too large they say), the proximity of the port to the center of town (compare this with Houston, for instance, where the port is miles away from the city), and the easy-going atmosphere of The City That Care Forgot. Most of all, however, they like upper Decatur Street with its Greek bars and nightclubs. There they can enjoy themselves with their friends in a Greek environment and, if they wish, find female companionship.

One might expect that the equivalent of Decatur Street exists in most major ports, but such is not the case. The Greek clubs of New York are spread out throughout the city and do not cater specifically to the sailors. Similarly, other ports either do not have Greek clubs (this would include many of the Caribbean islands which are frequent destinations for Greek ships passing through New Orleans), or, like New York, do not "specialize" the way Decatur Street does in entertaining *naftes* (sailors). Thus the concentration of clubs such as Scorpios, The Athenian Room, Habana Bar and others in one area is not only convenient for the sailors, but it also gives them some feeling of being in a Greek environment since the Decatur Street area includes Greek-run shops selling electronic equipment (radios, cameras, etc.), clothing (especially blue jeans), and touristic bric-a-brac.

"Red Lights Over New Orleans" read a headline in the May 14th, 1979 *Figaro* about the heavy concentration of street prostitution on Decatur Street before the late May police bust of the area. And surely the image of black, white and mixed prostitutes of all ages and sizes, standing hip to hip on the 200 block of Decatur Street has, for many New Orleanians, fused in their minds with the image of Greek bars and Greek sailors. Such a *montage* is in actuality quite erroneous. The street scene that was allowed to develop by the New Orleans Police Department and the scene inside the Greek bars belong to vastly different scripts. At present (June, 1979) Decatur Street appears deserted after dark. But in recent months leading up to the bust, the hookers who gathered on the street were attracting a general clientele: sailors and non-sailors, some Greeks, but, according to interviews with prostitutes, certainly men of many other nationalities as well.

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Again I stress the importance of the three elements which make up the atmosphere within the Greek clubs that stands in strong contrast to the street scene outside: male comradeship, female companionship and a Greek environment. The "Greekness" includes the music (live bouzouki bands with singers), the food and wine, though most sailors prefer scotch and whiskey, and *spoken Greek*. A reporter for *Figaro* visiting the Scorpio club the evening of the bust emphasized the contrast between the street action and the club, concluding that inside, "the atmosphere is vital and, in a way, wholesome" (June 4th, 1979).

For the non-Greek, these clubs at first seem to be no more than "rip-off" joints for homesick sailors. In one sense this view is correct. These clubs, run by Greeks, charge about \$50 for a bottle of liquor, \$15 and up for wine, and \$2.50 for beer. Thus a sailor may easily spend anywhere from \$100 to \$300 in an evening which would include food, liquor, money thrown to the band (a popular custom), and money spent on flowers and, perhaps, women. One *capitanos* (captain) I spoke with who had been to one of the Decatur Street clubs stated he had spent over \$250 the previous night, a sum he found neither extravagant nor cheap, but about what he expected to pay for an *occasional* night on the town. Why pay so much? Why not go around the corner to any French Quarter bar and pay much less and enjoy Dixieland or jazz or country and western music and perhaps meet some Americans? Why be ripped-off by fellow Greeks?

The answer is quite simple from their point of view. As an official in one of the local Greek shipping agencies explained to me, most of the Greek sailors *know* they are paying outrageous prices. But they enjoy the Greek environment, they like being with their friends, especially since very few speak any English, and they also get pleasure from spending and giving away money for pleasure. "When I go out to have a good time," said a young captain of a Greek freighter bound for the Caribbean with a shipment of soybean meal, "I don't care how much I spend." Furthermore, most of the sailors realize that prices are much cheaper in the other French Quarter bars, but, once again, they feel most comfortable with their own people (*me tous dikous mas* as they say). Their feeling towards the Greek clubs is in fact very similar to the attitude of many Greeks in Greece towards the taverna-night spots. Especially among the working class Greeks of Athens, it is common for a man to work hard at a factory during the week and spend a good portion of his salary in one night at a taverna on wine, women and song. In part such extravagance is a form of release from tensions, pressures, frustrations, and yet is also part of a cultural attitude combining bravado and conspicuous consumption. In Greece, for instance, the old custom of hiring a waiter to stand by your table and simply drop one plate after another on the ground to smash before your feet was one way to show the world who you were (how much money you had): the more plates the better. The attraction of the Greek sailors to the Greek clubs is, therefore, a more complicated ritual than simply a night out on the town; it is also a reaffirmation of themselves as individuals and as Greeks.

The *Figaro* reporter spoke of the "healthy" atmosphere in the Greek clubs as compared to the flesh markets on Decatur Street. This is an accurate observation. The Greek sailors have a good time, but they are seldom rowdy, vulgar, out of con-

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trol. The Greek dances exemplify this. The typical dance in the Greek clubs is the *zeybekiko*, a highly individualistic dance which, according to Elias Petropoulos in his 1975 study, *Rebetika: Songs from the Old Greek Underworld*, "allows the dancer the greatest freedom of expression of all Greek dances." It is one man dancing alone, usually with his head tipped down, his arms extended above his head, his legs bent as he moves, as if hypnotized by a spot on the floor which he uses as a still point for his circular movements. The dance allows for maximum freedom because it is a dance done alone, and because the dancer may do whatever he chooses. But what is important is that even in this freedom he is under control. He chooses when to leap into the air, slap his heels and land in a crouch on the floor, and similarly, he chooses when to remain almost motionless, poised for action like a coiled spring. The *zeybekiko* is a man's expression of himself: it is both a letting go and a matter of style, dignity, control.

Much of the same attitude can be seen in the relationship between the Greek sailors and the women they meet in the clubs. There is very little crossover between the hookers on Decatur Street and those who are "regulars" in the Greek bars. There is no taunting of customers as on the street and no open bargaining at the tables. As in the dancing, there are cultural rituals that are fairly strictly observed. As one Greek put it, what takes place is a "mini-courtship": girls are invited to a table and made to feel part of the *parea* (group of companions). Some of the girls are prostitutes and will, when it comes time to leave, agree on terms with their sailors. But a number of other women are not hookers in the strict sense; rather, they might be called "Greek groupies." Both hookers and groupies speak Greek though none of them are Greek, yet the groupies simply enjoy being with Greek men and will accept presents, trips, and the pleasure of being wined and dined in style. While some of these encounters may be one-night stands, often the mini-courtship becomes a mini-affair, and that in turn may become a renewed relationship whenever the sailor returns to New Orleans. Frequently these women travel with the sailors, meet them in Greece and even marry them.

Consider one woman as an example. Let us call her Karen. While each woman has a different story to tell, there is enough that is similar in their narratives that Karen's situation may be taken as representative. Karen is twenty-eight, white, and from a lower-middle class Catholic New Orleans family. She has a high school education and has worked as a secretary and sales clerk. She speaks fluent Greek and only goes with Greeks. Her first contact with Greeks began eight years ago, and since then she has been married to a sailor for nine months, had two children by Greeks, visited Greece four times on trips paid for by Greeks, and travelled on Greek ships to a variety of locations. "I have always been treated as a lady," she comments, "and I've never had to raise my voice to a Greek." Often she does not accept money, but she does consider prostitution as her profession and claims she can make up to \$250 on a good night. She dresses rather conservatively (a dress with a high neckline) compared to the hookers on the street and speaks with disdain for the Decatur Street girls whom she says are giving the "profession" a bad name. She has never had to work the streets and would definitely consider it beneath her dignity. She is serious about seeing no one but Greeks; she would not consider other sailors

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be they Italian, Latin American or American. "All I want is to earn a good living," she concludes, "so that I can give my children many of the things that I never had."

These women have in a sense become part of the Greek environment of New Orleans that the sailors find so attractive. This is especially true because in other American ports and other countries the only women in the ports are the "hard-core" prostitutes like those found on Decatur Street in the past. In Brazil, for instance, there are also laws against bringing women on ship and, as one Greek put it, even if you meet a girl you like, there is a greater chance "that you might get shot by some jealous boyfriend."

Trouble is not a Greek sailor's middle name. Police and U.S. Immigration officials report little difficulty with Greek sailors in terms of violence, drunken conduct, and theft. Immigration officials in New Orleans do state, however, that because there are so many Greek sailors, there are a number of cases of jumping ship each year. Statistics are not available by nationality, and the monthly totals vary widely depending on the month and the number of ships in port. Also, of those reported "missing" some turn up within 48 hours, having simply been on a spree or having gotten lost. Of the remaining sailors who have deliberately used their jobs as a means of slipping into the United States with hopes of staying, many, it is true, are never caught. New Orleans has no significant deviation from the national statistics in such matters since the phenomenon of illegal entry into the country occurs everywhere there is a port or a border. But it may be true that there are more Greeks jumping ship than in the past because of the nature of the "new" Greek sailor outlined earlier. It would be misleading, however, to think that these individuals constitute a large group. New Orleans Immigration officials report monthly totals for all nationalities at about ten to fifteen. Thus if we guessed that the Greeks made up even half of those numbers, that would still mean a very small percentage considering the large number of Greek vessels in port each month. This is confirmed by a Greek captain who assured me he loses no more than one or two deserters a year.

The St. Nicholas Maritime Center

There is no doubt that the Greek seamen enjoy New Orleans. But this is not to say that they do not have the same problems sailors away from home face the world over. For all of the modern innovations on ships, such as television, cassette movies, and radio-phone patches, the life of the sailor is still at times lonely, routine, and demanding. In a foreign port there is the language barrier above all else which makes doing everything more difficult. Checks have to be mailed to Greece, shopping done, contact with dentists, doctors, hospitals made. And, in New Orleans, despite the attractions of Decatur Street, there has been no place to go to meet other Greeks and to relax that was not a bar, a club, a disco. The Saint Nicholas Maritime Center is designed to help provide these services and opportunities.

The Center was initiated and will be directed by Father William G. Gaines, a Greek Orthodox priest originally from Kentucky who has been in New Orleans since 1954. Father Gaines has been connected with every phase of the Greek community in New Orleans since his arrival. He was Dean of the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of

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New Orleans from 1954-1972 and built the membership up to 300 families by the time he resigned. He is Greek Orthodox Director of Campus Ministries for the Southeastern states with an office at Tulane University. As a "jack of all trades" he visits other parishes throughout the South, preaching, helping with youth camps, aiding groups to organize and carry out church-related projects. A graduate of Hellenic College Seminary in Brookline, Massachusetts, Father Gaines has gone on to earn Master's Degrees in theology, psychology, and classics, to teach courses at Tulane and to lecture widely on other campuses.

Much of his work in recent years, however, has involved his voluntary position as Director of Maritime Ministry. Without pay, he has put in an average of 36 hours a week visiting Greek sailors in hospitals and on ships. In 1978 he made 615 ship calls and 940 hospital visits. To the sailors he is known as *Pappouli* ("little priest") for the help he renders beyond simply lending a sympathetic ear in translating documents for them, helping them fill out legal papers, write checks, and complete many on-shore chores they may have. Though he himself receives no salary for this work, his projects have been supported by the Greek Federation of Shipowners located in Piraeus, Greece, by concerned individuals and by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. He is presently negotiating to extend his services to the Russian sailors since many of them are also Orthodox, and there are hundreds of Soviet Russian ships that anchor in New Orleans on their way to and from the United States to pick up cargoes of grain and wheat each year.

But it is the Maritime Center of which Father Gaines is most proud. A project that has been under consideration for several years, the St. Nicholas Center has become a reality with the cooperation of the Catholic organization that runs the entire Stella Maris building and with the support of influential members of the Greek shipping community in New Orleans. St. Nicholas is the Greek saint of the seas, and the center appropriately offers many facilities to aid Greek sailors. Included in the building that was once an ice factory and later a Catholic boxing gym (St. Mary's Community Center) is a full basketball court, an outdoor swimming pool, a locker room, a snack bar, a game room, a library with Greek magazines and daily newspapers from Athens, a movie-meeting room, and a TV room that includes a video cassette machine with language tapes for those who wish to work on their English. And there is an attractive chapel done in the nautical colors of blue and white which also happen to be the colors of the Greek flag. The chapel is named "Our Lady of Good Voyage" by the Catholics, but during Orthodox services, St. Nicholas' icon appears on the front of the altar, which is shaped like a ship's bow.

Will the Greek sailors use the Center? Will the resident Greek community support it and come in contact with their fellow Greeks? These questions remain unanswered. The Center will not replace Decatur Street, but Father Gaines hopes that it will initially attract the ships' officers and then the AB's. Recognition and support are now beginning to come also from the Greek government, the Greek merchant marine and the Greek navy.

The potential of the St. Nicholas center is great. Its very existence makes it a showcase for service to Greek sailors. And plans for activities have already been announced: there will be Orthodox services in the chapel once a month with Greek

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movies being shown later during the day. Both sailors and members of the community are invited. Beginning with such contacts, other projects may be possible. Odysseus is a wanderer, a seafarer, but the St. Nicholas Center under the leadership of Father Gaines may prove to be a helpful harbor where two differing Greek communities begin to meet. As Odysseus sets out on one of his adventures in Homer's epic, he addresses his crew:

The rest of you, who are my eager companions, wait here
while I, with my own ship and companions that are in it,
go and find out about these people, and learn what they are,
whether they are savage and violent, and without justice,
or hospitable to strangers and with minds that are godly.

(Richard Lattimore trans.)

In Greece, hospitality has been a strong tradition since Homeric times. The hope is that the modern sailors will find the Greek community of New Orleans "hospitable to strangers and with minds that are godly."



The Borabod Family, ca. 1910
Courtesy: Lillian Martinez Burtanog

**Seven Generations of a New Orleans
 Filipino Family
 by
 Marina E. Espina**

At the turn of the century, Louisiana was already the home of several hundred Filipino families. According to Eulogio Yatar, one of the Filipino community leaders, in correspondence in 1906, the Filipino population in New Orleans alone was over 2,000. This is not improbable since Filipinos first settled in southeastern Louisiana as early as 1765. They were among the forerunners of the great variety of ethnic groups making up the Mississippi Delta population. Although most of these Louisiana Filipinos were born in this country, still many of them were natives of the Philippines, particularly the Visayan islands.

It should be emphasized at the outset that the migration of Filipinos to Louisiana in the eighteenth century has not been formally documented in history books or in the U.S. Census. Basically, the Filipino immigration to America was officially opened

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only after the Spanish-American War in 1898 when the Philippines became a U.S. possession, fostered the belief that prior to this time no Filipino has crossed the Pacific. Thus, the U.S. Census of 1910 set the Filipino population at the low figure of only 160.

Prior to 1920, when the number of Filipinos in the continental United States was still insignificant, intermarriage posed no problem. Later, as immigration increased and their numbers became more noticeable, public attention began to center on questions of economic competition and social intermingling. The type of discrimination having the most devastating effect on the early development of Filipino families in the U.S. was that embodied in the anti-miscegenation laws of California and a dozen other states. As defined by these laws, miscegenation was marriage or cohabitation between a white person and a member of another race. Until 1948, when the California Supreme Court ruled the anti-miscegenation laws there unconstitutional, non-white races in general, including "Negro, mulattoes, Malaysians, Mongolians," could not intermarry with the white race. Unfortunately for the Filipinos who belong to the Malayan race, proponents of such laws regarded the Filipinos as Mongolians because their argument was that Malayan is a branch of the Mongolian race. While there are scientists who classify Malaysians as an offshoot of the Mongolian race, nevertheless, most people think of "Mongolian" as referring to yellow and not to brown people like Filipinos. The California anti-miscegenation laws unquestionably created serious problems due to the lack of uniformity in their enforcement.

While the problem of miscegenation was brewing in California, Filipinos in Louisiana did not experience the strong racial reaction so common throughout the western United States. Louisiana is in large measure tolerant of most of the diverse groups of people that have inhabited the state throughout history. Rather than trying to make outcasts of the Filipinos, the people of Louisiana were basically tolerant of interracial friendships and marriage.

This is not to say, however, that Louisiana has been free of any racial discrimination. Indeed, it had its own anti-miscegenation law prohibiting marriage between whites or Indians and blacks. Nevertheless, this statute did not deter the formation of interracial Filipino families in Louisiana for the reason that here Filipinos were classified as white. The birth and marriage certificates of descendants attest to this fact. The Filipinos first set up villages made up of men only, who married women belonging to other ethnic groups, such as French, Irish, German, English, Welsh, Spanish and sometimes American Indian.

By far the oldest documented Filipino family that I have come across in my nine years of research is that of Felipe Madrigal, whose arrival in Louisiana some of his descendants estimated to be in the early 1800s. They claimed that Felipe, better known as Phillip, hailed from Manila in the Philippines. Since the name Madrigal is rather popular in the island of Negros, it is quite possible that Felipe was a Visayan just like most of the early Filipino settlers in Louisiana. Whatever his exact place of origin, he is still remembered; a fading picture of Felipe Madrigal is kept by Lillian Martinez Burtanog, 74, Felipe's great-granddaughter.

The story goes that Felipe Madrigal came to Louisiana when New Orleans was becoming an important port of call for ships coming from Europe. As an experienced

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seaman, Felipe did not encounter any difficulty landing a job on one of the passenger ships that plied between Europe and America. On one of his homebound trips, Felipe met his future bride, an Irish woman named Bridgett Nugent, who was a passenger on the clipper. Bridgett was with her parents and brother who were bound for America. During the three-month journey from Ireland, Felipe and Bridgett became well acquainted and were married upon their arrival in New Orleans. Her parents were extremely disappointed, for they had hoped their daughter would marry a rich American. Bridgett's parents continued north and were never to contact their daughter again. Felipe quit his job as a seaman in order to be with his bride, and they settled on the Westbank of New Orleans.

Out of this union, three daughters were born: Helen, Mary Ellen and Elizabeth. When the girls were growing up, Felipe proved to be a model husband and father. This set a good example for his children to follow. The daughters emulated their mother by also marrying Filipinos. Helen married Teodoro Victoriano, better known as Doro, Mary Ellen to Daniel Reyes, and Elizabeth to Baltic Borabod. Because there was no son to keep the name of Madrigal alive, it was lost after the second generation.

Felipe tried his hand at business and opened his own restaurant. During the Civil War when the U.S. currency was changed to Confederate money, he managed to hide some. Felipe had ambivalent feelings about the Americans fighting among themselves. But he was very confident that the divided states would again be reunited. At the end of the war, Felipe's faith in the American dream was proven when he dug up what he had buried in 1861, a can containing 200 Yankee dollars. He was quite a rich Filipino in a land of Confederate money.

The Madrigal family tree has indeed grown. There are now seven generations, and descendants can be found in the four corners of the United States: from Washington state to Connecticut and from California to Virginia. Because of this intricate network, it is essential that I simply confine my comments only to those descendants residing in the greater New Orleans area.

At age 13, Elizabeth, the youngest of the Madrigal sisters, was married to Baltic Borabod, a Filipino from Cebu who had come to Louisiana in the 1850s. Baltic was an overseer at the Wilkinson Plantation in Myrtle Grove for many years. As he grew older, his thick mass of white hair made a striking impression as he rode about on his white horse, overseeing the field hands.

As a Filipino's daughter, Elizabeth blended perfectly into French-Spanish Louisiana by being a fluent speaker of French, Spanish, English and Tagalog. Baltic and Elizabeth had five children: Mathilda, Othelia (Lily), Sidonia, Rosalie and Peter. Grandma Beth, as Elizabeth was fondly called by her grandchildren, taught her offspring a sense of togetherness. She would constantly impress upon them that they should keep in touch with each other no matter how far they might be apart and no matter how many years might intervene. To this day, these descendants return regularly for a reunion with their cousins in New Orleans. So close are they that the grandchildren talk familiarly of each other despite the fact some of them have never met. They share a common motto they acquired from their Grandma Beth: no fighting amongst ourselves but together we can whip the outsiders.

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Two fishermen, Hermogenes Ferniz and Benito Yabut Martinez, became the husbands of two Borabod sisters, Sidonia and Rosalie. Herman, as Hermogenes was popularly called, was the captain of his own fishing fleet and employed 18-25 men. Fishing and shrimping were his main occupations, although during the winter, he worked in sugar refineries. He and his wife, Sidonia, had six children: Albert, Agnes, Carroll, Herman, Gerome and Elizabeth. The last three died in infancy. There are at present seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren in the Ferniz family.

On the other hand, Benito Yabut Martinez did not devote his entire life to fishing as had Herman Ferniz. Instead, he established his own tailor shop in the French Quarter. He and Rosalie had five children: Lillian, Benedict, William, Irving and Rosalie. The oldest daughter, Lillian, met a second generation Filipino from Mobile, Alabama, named Walter Burtanog. Six children were born to this union: Audrey, Lillian Mae, Walter, Jr., Joyce, Benita and Carroll. Today, the Burtanogs have 23 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren comprising the seven generations of the Madrigal tree.

Of the seven generations some observations may be made: (1) They have retained their Catholic faith; when a member of the family married a Protestant or a Quaker, for instance, it was the newcomers who were converted to Catholicism. (2) The male descendants had to marry women outside the Filipino group because there were no Filipino women coming from the Philippine Islands. On the other hand, the female descendants preferred to marry Filipinos from the islands. Perhaps the main reasons why the descendants were attracted to Filipino men are the favorable image they had of their male ancestors, their close association with the Filipino community in the fishing villages (for instance, there was a club house by Myrtle Grove where socials were held providing them with the opportunities to meet eligible Filipino bachelors), and probably a certain element of pride in their racial and national descent.

I have discussed but one of the Filipino families of New Orleans. Others of note from fishing villages such as the Manila Village in Jefferson Parish are the Asercion family, the Gedorla family, the Navarro family, the Von Hassel family, the de la Cruz family, and the Saplut family. Indeed, nearly every Filipino family in Louisiana has an exotic history of its own. Generally, the younger generations have pleasant memories of their forebears in spite of the fact that they did not descend from wealth or royalty.



*Children in Versailles Gardens
Photo: J.C. Pierce*

**The Vietnamese in New Orleans:
A Preliminary Report
by
Dr. Martha C. Ward
and
Zachary Gussow**

Among the many ethnic groups represented in Louisiana, those from Indochina are the most recent arrivals. Their presence in this country today is a direct consequence of the departure of American forces from Saigon in April, 1975. The Vietnamese who arrived and settled in this country have already survived the initial stages of traumatic exile and relocation. While such survival in the face of desperate conditions involving flight may bear testimony to durability and special skills, the motivation for most in leaving their homeland was primarily negative.

The Vietnamese in America have, for the most part, passed from refugees to immigrants, with provisions for permanent resident alien status already assured. But

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although Public Law 95-145 allows for a speedy status change from "parolee" to citizen, cultural adjustments and the transition from Vietnam to American cities and life-styles represents a psychosocial, not a legislative, process.

Sponsored by the Associated Catholic Charities, south Louisiana initially received a specialized group of Vietnamese. Partly self-selected, the refugee group that came here were predominantly fishermen and village farmers drawn to the area by environment, climate and reputation. The move from Vietnam to south Louisiana represents a major cultural dislocation, requiring complex adjustments in laying the past to rest and in creating a new beginning in an alien land. The greater New Orleans area is urban and, more importantly, still retains many of the characteristics, attitudes, and institutions of a population stratified and segmented along earlier lines where constraints to mobility have helped perpetuate ethnic identities and structures through barriers to wider community participation. For complex historical reasons the in-group model remains a strong social force in the life of the area. Moreover, New Orleans has never had an established or visible Asian community.

The bulk of the Vietnamese population in southern Louisiana currently is concentrated in four communities, all of which are located in the greater New Orleans area. The four communities of high Vietnamese population concentration reflect those neighborhoods and housing developments into which they were initially relocated. The Vietnamese population in southern Louisiana continues to grow since 1975, with evidence of more Vietnamese yet to come. From eleventh in the nation in terms of the number of refugees by states in 1975, Louisiana now ranks fourth in the nation, exceeded at the end of 1977 in the South Central Region only by the state of Texas (HEW Refugee Task Force reports).

The Vietnamese refugee population shows evidence of being a fairly mobile population. In southern Louisiana this is reflected in the recent movement of Vietnamese fishing families from the Belle Chasse area in Plaquemines Parish to Beaumont, Texas. From a high of about forty families, there are currently only about six or eight fishing families left in Plaquemines Parish. Within metropolitan New Orleans, the search for adequate housing and jobs, and the expressed desire to maintain ethnic and cultural ties continue to keep alive the expectation of shifts of Vietnamese households from the current four major areas of settlements into even closer community living arrangements.

According to a recent survey conducted by the University of New Orleans at the request of the Mayor's Office, it was estimated that there are nearly 4,000 Vietnamese living in the New Orleans metropolitan area, with households divided nearly equally between the east and west banks of the Mississippi River. Total population by communities are as follows: on the West Bank there are the three communities in the Woodlawn and Algiers area, with an estimated population of 780; Bridge City, with 571; and the Marrero, Harvey, Gretna area, with 500. On the East Bank, the Versailles Apartments in New Orleans East is the largest and most highly concentrated with an estimated 2,063 Vietnamese housed there (Ragas & Maruggi, 1978, p.1). The area of Versailles Gardens is considered by residents to be the largest concentrated population of Vietnamese in the United States.

Estimates of the number of Vietnamese in New Orleans varies among surveys

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and sources. One HEW report estimates the number to be over 5,000 in Orleans Parish alone and at least 6,000 for the State of Louisiana (HEW Refugee Task Force Report, Sept. 1977:24). Associated Catholic Charities estimated in 1978 that there were over 7,000 Vietnamese in the greater New Orleans area. Estimates in excess of those available through surveys may be justified on the grounds that an additional, but as yet undetermined, number of Vietnamese, generally the more affluent, are known to have independently housed themselves in local neighborhoods throughout the city. For this and other reasons, the strong probability of under-reporting in these censuses exists; total figures may well be as high as 9,000. Census figures such as those quoted above are a sensitive political issue in assessing the impact of the Vietnamese on the local community.

An Example: Versailles Gardens

The "Vietnamization" of Versailles Gardens is apparent from even a cursory inspection. Traditional Vietnamese clothing, small front yard vegetable and herbal garden plots, fish drying on porches, and the proliferation of Vietnamese businesses are visible evidence of the growth of a community. A permanent chapel on the corner of Alcee Fortier and Peltier was recently completed with contributions of the Catholic refugees and contractual aid from the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Archbishop Hannan dedicated the chapel in commemoration of the Vietnamese martyrs of a century earlier. The location of this chapel is strategic, and visitors from other Vietnamese communities arrive by the busloads.

Many social services are being provided within the confines of the community. The Vietnamese use English only outside the neighborhood, and this is rare for the elderly, pre-schoolers and housewives. The Saigon Store and Vietnam Market provide a range of services here, including delivery of goods, and the Archdiocese and state or federal aid programs, including classes in English, are staffed within the community. Doctors, translators and other service personnel visit the "Vietnamese Office" on a regular schedule. The Chapel and the Buddhist Temples hold regular services and frequent outdoor processions.

Some preliminary facets of family life are already apparent. The official figures of over six persons per household may be an underrepresentation, as local landlords have complained regularly of overcrowding. Most parents appear to take very seriously the "Vietnamese School" scheduled just before evening mass. They may insist on more strict attendance of this school than of the daytime public schools for their children. Public concern over the potential problems of mixed marriages has already been expressed. The major elements of American culture which have been absorbed so far are technological: televisions, decorated vans, clothing for those who work outside the small community or small consumer goods.

Two of the most important sources of income, fishing and sewing, follow traditional sexual divisions of labor. The area's geographical proximity to Lake Pontchartrain, the Gulf of Mexico and the coastal and intercoastal waters has allowed retention of fishing as an important source of income. Sewing as a primary cottage industry and the growth of Vietnamese-owned businesses catering specifically to Vietnamese seem to contribute to local identity as a Vietnamese community.

The single largest employer of Vietnamese in New Orleans is Schwegmann's

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Giant Super Markets, Avondale Shipping Yards, local seafood restaurants and seafood processing plants are other major sources of employment. These visible aspects of Vietnamese acculturation have been widely reported in the media.

Several community self-help networks appear to be functioning. The nightly Chapel masses and home prayer meetings are well attended. Several Vietnamese-owned billiard establishments and coffee shops have opened in the neighborhood and are reported to be doing a booming business with the young, male Vietnamese.

Similar immigrant life can be reported from the other areas of concentrated Vietnamese settlement in New Orleans. Some unknown but growing proportion of the Vietnamese are settling in nuclear families in the non-ethnic neighborhoods of New Orleans, but little is known about them in contrast to the visible communities.

The Future

It can be predicted that the Vietnamese community will become a permanent part of the social organization and life of New Orleans, with their numbers increasing rather than decreasing. Given the demographic structure of the Vietnamese population, with an estimated 64 percent of the population 17 years of age and under, the coping and adaptational problems of teenagers, children, and infants can be expected to loom large in the adjustment of the Vietnamese to New Orleans, and of New Orleans to the Vietnamese.

There are indications that a considerable disparity is developing between the coping and adaptational strategies among teenagers compared to the adult and elderly members of the Vietnamese population. Community leaders have expressed concern that teenagers are becoming "Westernized too fast." They mention a rejection of parental values and, in some cases, even running away from home. The problem appears to be more acute among teenagers from large and poor families. The rejection of parental values, becoming Westernized too fast, and the repeated observation that young Vietnamese have "fallen in love with the American automobile" pose numerous questions about the effect that this teenage response can be expected to have on traditional Vietnamese values of family systems, generation, and community. For those over 65, an estimated 3.5 percent, special adaptational problems are posed as they represent the strongest reservoir of values of family solidarity and cultural identity. Ability to speak English or even the expectation that they will readily learn the language is exceptionally low among this group. Thus, the elderly face a double burden and jeopardy: both difficulties in learning to comprehend and adequately cope with the problems of acculturation, and the threat to their traditional roles as elders by the developing cultural and cognitive distance between themselves and the bulk of the Vietnamese population — the youth. Elderly women, notes the HEW Task Forces report (Dec. 31, 1977, p. 72), are at high risk in terms of achieving self-sufficiency, as are unaccompanied women with small children, and refugees in poor health.

There is already evidence of the beginnings of a strong incipient community organizational structure evolving among the Vietnamese peoples in the New Orleans area. Some are highly visible, as evidenced by the numerous ceremonies and programs organized about Tet celebrations both this year and in the past few years. Less

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visible are the number of religious, professional and cultural associations that the Vietnamese are organizing. In addition to the above formal and informal groupings, a number of small businesses and shops have been started that are intricately related to Vietnamese neighborhoods. These facilitate maintenance of traditional Vietnamese cultural and social ties and traditions.

This spring, in response to President Carter's proclamation, members of the Asian community of New Orleans sponsored a successful Asian-Pacific American Heritage Week Festival. This is the first time in New Orleans that major Asian ethnic groups publicly gathered to affirm their identity and celebrate their cultural contributions to this city. The emergence of this self-help association based on Asian ethnicity in a non-Asian setting will have significant long-range implications for the adaptation of the Vietnamese to New Orleans.

The Vietnamese are not the only refugee group that has come to this area in modern times; however, culturally they are the most alien. Not only do the Vietnamese face problems of adaptation and adjustment to their new environment, but the population of New Orleans must cope with problems of receiving the Vietnamese into the community. Dealing with cultural misunderstandings and learning the mores and ways of life of both groups vis-à-vis one another involves both the Vietnamese and the wider New Orleans community in a reciprocal process which has only begun.

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Isleño and Cuban Spanish

by

Beatriz Varela

In last year's seminar to inaugurate the Ethnicity in New Orleans Institute, I read a short paper on the history and lifestyle of the Isleños of St. Bernard Parish and the Cubans of New Orleans. After the presentation, I was asked by several persons attending the program about the Spanish spoken by these groups. Motivated by their linguistic curiosity, I shall now try to draw some general parallels between Isleño Spanish and Cuban Spanish.

Before proceeding with the similarities and contrasts between both ways of speaking, let me clarify two important points. First, Cubans and Isleños communicate with one another perfectly as well as with Cubans living in other cities and with the inhabitants of the Canary Islands, the homeland of the ancestors of the Isleños. Therefore, both varieties of Spanish are not only mutually intelligible but also suitable for communicating with the rest of the Spanish-speaking world, despite the differences and shortcomings in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation that I am going to mention.

Are Isleño Spanish and Cuban Spanish dialects? The answer to this second question is *no* if we consider that there is no single aspect in the pronunciation, vocabulary or grammar of either Isleño or Cuban Spanish that can be viewed as a distinct, exclusive phenomenon, not to be found in any other Spanish-speaking region. The answer is *yes* if, on the other hand, we consider the two as popular, unwritten forms of Spanish, spoken by minority ethnic groups living in St. Bernard Parish and in New Orleans. In this paper, the word *dialect* will be used with this last meaning.

To study their similarities and differences, I am going to classify them in three groups:

- 1) Those not due to acculturation.
- 2) Those due to acculturation.
- 3) Those not necessarily due to acculturation but certainly incremented by it.

In the first group, I shall discuss some similarities and differences in the vocabulary and pronunciation of the two dialects that are typical of the Spanish spoken in Cuba and the Canary Islands and therefore cannot be attributed to acculturation.

Vocabulary similarities:

1) Isleño and Cuban Spanish share words of different origins. For example, *gofio* "corn meal" is, according to some linguists, a word derived from *Guanche*, a pre-Hispanic language spoken in the Canary Islands. Whether or not this etymology is correct, the fact is the word and the meaning are common to our two dialects. In the Spanish of Cuba *gofio* had become such a popular meal among the poor that a compound noun was formed with the third person singular of the verb *comer* "to eat" and *gofio*: *un comegofio* is "a foolish person."

Other words shared by both dialects are derived from the Indian languages spoken in the Caribbean or in Mexico. *Jaiba* "crab" and its derivative *jaibero* "crab fisherman" as well as *máiz* "maize" pronounced *máis* in Isleño Spanish and in the

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vulgar speech of other Spanish regions — come from the Arahucan language which was spoken in the Caribbean. *Caguama* "tortoise," pronounced like the French *caouane* in Isleño Spanish, comes from the Carib language of the Caribbean area. In the Spanish of Cuba *caguama* is also used to refer to "a fat woman." Neither *jaiba* or *caguama* is known in the Canary Islands. Words like *tomate* "tomato" from the *Nahuatl* language spoken in Mexico do not seem so peculiar because they belong to the standard vocabulary of all the Spanish-speaking world.

The word for *bus* varies from region to region where Spanish is spoken. *Camión, ómnibus, bus, autobús, chiva* and *micro* are a few examples of this variety. It is interesting to point out that the Isleño dialect employs *guagua*, a word common in the Spanish of the Antilles. The term is of uncertain origin, but it was used for the first time in Cuba, and from there it went to Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, the Canary Islands and St. Bernard Parish.

And finally, without examples so my readers can research the words on their own, let me add that the Isleños and the Cubans employ the same curse words, with the same intonation and in the same context.

Vocabulary differences:

1) Before coming to Louisiana in 1778, the ancestors of the Isleños had been in close contact with the Portuguese language. Many of the inhabitants of the Canary Islands were of Portuguese origin and trade with neighboring Portuguese lands was very active. This explains the presence of Portuguese phonetic and lexical trends in Isleño Spanish. *Peje*, the word for "fish" employed by the Isleños, is derived from the Old Portuguese *peixe*. The Cubans use the standard Spanish *pez* which shows the regular evolution of the group *sc* in Vulgar Latin *piscem*.

2) The Isleño settlers of St. Bernard Parish came in close contact with the French language through the French owners of plantations, the French priests who came from New Orleans and the Acadian families that sought refuge in the parish. It is, therefore, not surprising to find words of French origin in the Isleño dialect: *dogri*, *egreta* and *canar nuar*, are Hispanized forms of Louisiana French *deau gris* "grey duck," *aigrette* "blue crane" and *canard noir* "black duck." All these words are unknown to the Cubans who use instead the standard Spanish forms *pato*, *grulla* and *pato negro*.

3) The older Isleño dialect possesses a larger number of archaisms than the not quite twenty-year-old Cuban dialect. Words like *dir* "to go," *truje* "I brought," and *semos* "we are," are not part of the speech of the Cubans, although probably intelligible to them since they are common to other isolated Spanish speaking areas.

4) Besides the Indians, there are three other ethnic groups that have influenced the language, culture and civilization of Cuba. From the Spaniards, the Cubans adopted their language and religion. From the Africans their musical rhythms and many words and expressions, some of which — like *quimbombó* "gumbo" — are also common to Louisiana French. From the Chinese, the Cuban dialect preserves words and idiomatic phrases: *chaucha* "food" also found as *KauKau* in the English dialect of Hawaii, and *no salvarlo ni el médico chino* "to be in critical condition."

Pronunciation similarities:

1) There is no *th* sound in either dialect. The letters *c* (in front of *e*, *i*), *z* and *s* are

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all pronounced as *s*. *Casar* "to marry" and *cazar* "to hunt" are, therefore, homophones in Cuban and Isleño Spanish, in American Spanish, in the Spanish of Southern Spain and of the Canary Islands. However, in the Spanish spoken in Northern and Central Spain, the *c* (in front of *e*, *i*) and *z* are pronounced with a *th* sound so *casar* and *cazar* constitute a minimal pair. The spelling of this minority is hence more phonetic than the spelling of the other more numerous groups of Spanish speakers.

2) The *s* used by the Cubans and the Isleños is very similar to the English *s*, and very different from the *s* used in Central and Northern Spain. For those of you who might be interested in knowing the articulation of both *s* sounds, let me add that they have the same point of articulation and are both voiceless sounds. The only difference consists in the part of the tongue used to articulate the sound. The *s* used in American, Andalusian and Canary Island Spanish as well as in English and other other Romance languages is articulated with the blade of the tongue against the gum ridge. The *s* of Central and Northern Spain is articulated with the tip of the tongue against the gum ridge, and it sounds very similar to the English *sh* sound.

3) The final *-s* of a syllable or a word is pronounced like an *-h* in both dialects. This aspiration of the *-s* in final position is also current in many other Spanish-speaking regions. Furthermore, it existed in Vulgar Latin and is evidenced by the loss of final *-s* in Italian and French. In the speech of some Spanish-speaking countries, the aspiration of final *-s* has disappeared and a change in the timbre of the now final vowel has been implanted to indicate plurality. The aspiration is still heard, however, in Isleño Spanish and in the Spanish of the Cubans living in New Orleans. In some regions of Cuba, the final *-s* has been dropped and the vowel has experienced a change in its timbre. The word *fresco* "fresh" according to the region will be heard as *fresco*, *frehco* or *fre-co*.

4) The letters *g* (in front of *e*, *i*) and *j* are pronounced like an *h* in Cuban and Isleño Spanish. In other Spanish regions, the sound is tenser and articulated way back in the mouth. It is, in fact, the most interior of all Spanish sounds. For example, in Cuban and Isleño Spanish *gente* "people" is pronounced *hén-te* versus *xén-te* in the Spanish of Northern and Central Spain.

5) The letters *y* and *ll* are pronounced the same in both dialects. This linguistic phenomenon, which is called *yeísmo*, is not as extensive as the one analyzed before, that is, the one referring to the pronunciation of *c* (in front of *e*, *i*) *z* and *s* as /s/. Nevertheless, it is not confined to Cuban and Isleño Spanish, and seems to be more common in urban than in rural areas. The Spanish of Cuba is *yeísta*; the Spanish of the Canary Islands, on the contrary, is not all *yeísta*. The phenomenon is found in the two big cities, Santa Cruz and Las Palmas, but not in the rural or smaller towns.

Pronunciation differences:

1) The initial *h-* of words that had an *f-* in Vulgar Latin is still aspirated in Isleño Spanish. I use the adverb *still* because this is a phonetic archaism of Isleño Spanish, which is found also in isolated rural areas and was the common pronunciation in Old Spanish.

The *h-* is silent in the speech of the Cubans in New Orleans. The aspiration and even an occasional *f-* sound are heard, however, in rural areas of Cuba. The Vulgar

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Latin *facere* became *hacer* "to make, to do" pronounced /ha-sér/ in Isleño Spanish and /a-sér/ in modern standard Spanish.

2) The characteristic palatal nasal sound of the Romance languages has disappeared in certain Spanish words used by the Isleños and has been preserved in others. *Isleños* "Islanders," the name they employ to refer to themselves, is pronounced *Islenos* with an alveolar *n* and not with the palatal sound which is spelled *ñ* in Spanish, *gn* in French and Italian and *nh* in Portuguese. Yet, in a frequently used Spanish four-letter word, the *ñ* sound is heard distinctively in Isleño speech.

I suppose this hesitation between *n* and *ñ* could be attributed to acculturation, but since the Isleño dialect has words with both sounds, we have preferred to study the phenomenon as a simple pronunciation difference between *Isleno* and Cuban Spanish. In the latter dialect, the two sounds are never interchanged and minimal pairs like *cana* "gray hair" and *caña* "cane" indicate that the phonemic difference is clearly maintained.

3) The Spanish *rr* sound with two or more trills is tenser in Cuban Spanish. In the speech of the Isleños it has become more relaxed and even though the two or more vibrations are heard, since the movements of the tongue are slower and softer, it sounds more like a whistling sound than a vibrating one. By the way, the Isleños always proudly say that they *rolan las erres* "roll their r's," using a loan verb from either the French *rouler* or the English *to roll*.

In the second group, I shall mention two prevailing characteristics. Both Isleño and Cuban Spanish have become an intimate, home language versus English, the language used in all other situations. In both the interference of English is evident. There are, however, some differences in the way these two similarities manifest themselves. For example, now in the Isleño community, only the older people speak and understand Spanish. The children of today's generation do not speak or understand it; their parents understand a little, but do not speak it. The Cubans, more recent arrivals, still communicate in Spanish, regardless of the age group. Their dialect is less primitive because they possess a more numerous corpus of Spanish words and idiomatic expressions than the speakers of the two hundred and one-year-old Isleño dialect.

The interference of English is shown, in the case of the Isleños, by the frequent switch from one language to the other without their realizing it. All new inventions, products, and experiences, for example, have an English name in Isleño speech and the majority of them are given the exact English pronunciation of the area. An English-speaking person who does not know Spanish would have no difficulty understanding English words like *can*, *shovel*, *anti-freeze* or *television*, as pronounced and used by an Isleño.

When the Cubans, on the other hand, borrow an English word, it is generally adapted to the Spanish pronunciation and grammar. For example, if it has a sound not familiar to Spanish, this sound is either eliminated or replaced by the most similar Spanish one. English *ticket* is pronounced *ti-ke* because Spanish does not have a final *-t* sound. English *shovel* is pronounced with an initial *ch-* sound because Spanish does not have an *sh* sound.

If the borrowed word is a noun, it is incorporated to a grammatical gender, and it

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will be masculine or feminine according to the sex of the person: English *boss* = Cuban Spanish *bos* (masc.) and *bosa* (fem.). If it is a thing, the gender will be assigned according to the structure of the loan word or to the gender of the term it is replacing: English *window* = Cuban Spanish *guindo* (masc.); English *freeze* = Cuban Spanish *frisada* (fem.). The loan nouns also adopt the Spanish endings for the plural: English *interpreters* = Cuban Spanish *interpretores*.

If the borrowed word is a verb, it takes the endings of the first conjugation Spanish verbs: -ar or -ear, and is conjugated in all the tenses, moods, persons and number that are typical of the Spanish verb system. The English verb *to crack* becomes *craquear* in Cuban Spanish and is conjugated *craqueo* "I crack," *craqueé* "I cracked," *craqueabas* "you used to crack" and so forth. In short, whereas both Islerio and Cuban Spanish reveal English interference, the manner in which it operates is very different.

As to the similarities and differences not precisely due to acculturation though probably increased by it, I shall refer to the pronunciation of the vowels and to two grammatical cases.

The vowels of the Spanish spoken in Cuba and the Canary Islands are more relaxed than the vowels of other Spanish-speaking regions. The stressed vowels, particularly in the Canary Islands, tend to be of longer duration. I believe that these innate characteristics have been accentuated in Islerio and Cuban Spanish by the interference of the English vowel system. Instead of a vowel with a less precise timbre, you hear in both dialects a colorless, indistinct, neutral sound, which is typical of the unstressed vowel in English. (Standard Spanish *la casa* "the house" = Cuban and Islerio Spanish *le case*). In the place of a stressed vowel of longer duration, you find in both dialects a breaking of the vowel into two sounds. This is called a glide and is characteristic of English stressed vowels. (Standard Spanish */tó-no/* "tone" = Cuban and Islerio Spanish */tów-no/*.)

The grammatical category of gender is so simple in English that one marvels when an English-speaking person masters a language in which gender is not so elementary. The difficulties of learning the gender of a word in Spanish are particularly concentrated in words ending in -e or in a *consonant* which can be either masculine or feminine, and in words ending in -a or which according to the usual -a and -o ending of feminine and masculine nouns should be feminine or masculine. Yet, unfortunately for the foreign student struggling with the language, they constitute exceptions to the general rule.

The reason these gender cases are mentioned is because in the speech of both Islerios and Cubans you frequently hear *la clima*, *la mapa*, *la problema*, *el foto*, *el costumbre* and *la color* instead of the standard *el clima*, *el mapa*, *el problema*, *la foto*, *la costumbre* and *el color*. Some of these gender changes were present in Old Spanish and are common as well to the Spanish of the Canary Islands and of rural areas in Cuba. Others are due to the influence of a language like English where gender is so logical that it makes you feel sure of certain patterns: for instance, if the word ends in -a it must be feminine.

In most of the Spanish-speaking world, the pronoun *vosotros* "you all," which is the familiar second person plural form, is not used. It is taught in the schools but

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never employed elsewhere. *Ustedes*, the second person plural pronoun, represents the familiar and the formal way of treatment in American Spanish and in the Spanish of Southern Spain and the Canary Islands just as in Isleño and Cuban Spanish.

However, the second person singular does have a familiar form *tú* or *vos* and a formal one *usted* almost everywhere Spanish is spoken. In Isleño and Cuban Spanish this *usted* form has disappeared. The speakers of these two home dialects are naturally only exposed to the *tú* familiar way of address, the only one used by their relatives in family gatherings. The *vos* form is not employed in either dialect. In other words, the fact that the pronouns *vosotros* and *vos* are unknown to both Isleños and Cubans has nothing to do with acculturation, but the disappearance of *usted* is certainly a consequence of it.

To summarize this linguistic comparison between Isleño and Cuban Spanish, let us underline the main similarities and differences:

1) English interference is evident in both dialects, but it manifests itself in a very different manner.

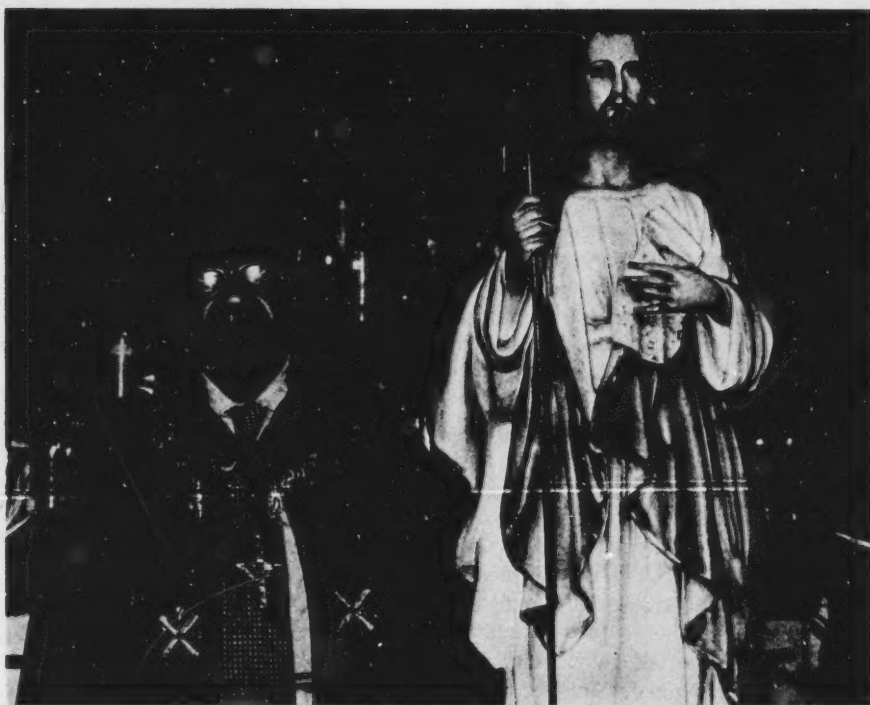
2) There is no single aspect in the pronunciation, vocabulary or grammar of either dialect that can be considered unique or exclusive.

3) The Isleño dialect has more archaisms and denotes the influence of Louisiana French and of Portuguese.

4) The Cuban dialect has a richer corpus of words and expressions, many of which are of Indian, African or Chinese origin.

What is the future of these two dialects in Louisiana? Are they doomed to disappear or will they become unintelligible to other Spanish speakers? Being a language professor and a firm believer in bilingual education, I feel optimistic about the survival of both dialects. In the American Southwest, Spanish has survived for 400 years. The Isleños and the Cubans each constitute a sedentary community with an established economy and social structure. This, and among the Cubans active trade and commerce with other Spanish-speaking nations, will help both dialects to survive and not evolve into an unintelligible patois.

I hope the Cubans and the Isleños will make their young ones aware of their cultural heritage and of the advantages that bilingualism has in today's shrinking world. And finally, educators must work hard to offer competent bilingual programs from the elementary level through the university level.



*Bishop E.J. Johnson Beside the Israelite Spiritual Church St. Joseph Altar.
Photo: Andrew Jackson Pickett, IV*

The Afro-American Celebration
of St. Joseph's Day
by
Andrew J. Kaslow

St. Joseph's Day is a special holiday in New Orleans, falling on March 19, midway between Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, and Easter. For those Orleanians who celebrate and temporarily put aside abstinence, it is a "break" from Lent, a time to revere the "step-father" of the Lord. The origins of this unusual holiday are in question, but anthropologist Ethelyn Orso points to evidence that the feast was begun by the Arbreshe Italians of Albanian descent whose ancestors lived in Sicily before moving to New Orleans. She also notes that by the late sixties, ethnic pride had become fashionable enough for the New Orleans Italian Cultural Society to begin promoting it as a day to celebrate Italianness, and the holiday followed by two days St. Patrick's Day, the day of Irish ethnic pride. Just how the celebration diffused to the Afro-American community is not known, but many Spiritual churches honor St.

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Joseph, and many of the Mardi Gras Indians, the soulful and spirited black Carnival maskers, choose this day to show their feathers one more time, before the dog days of summer roll in. To complete the roster of ethnic groups who honor St. Joe, there is now a large contingent of Vietnamese Catholics who pay him tribute at the enormous altar annually constructed in front of the Catholic church on Tulane Avenue which bears his name.

St. Joseph, the patron saint of the working people, inspires elaborate displays of secular and sacred ritual in the black community; one an outward celebration of dancing and drinking in the streets, the other an inward rejoicing of praying and feasting in the churches. Interestingly, the former involves principally males, the latter females, although participation is by no means exclusive according to sex. These contrasts, though, do underline the very real divisions within black New Orleans which are based on religion, sex, age, family background, occupation, and class, to name a few variables. In any case, St. Joseph's day is one which visibly accentuates the diversity of social activity in black neighborhoods in the city.

The focus of activity in Central City on March 19 is Shakespeare Park, corner of Washington and LaSalle, the usual meeting place for the Mardi Gras Indians, black social aid and pleasure clubs, marching brass bands, and assorted "second liners" who will meander through the neighborhood in a symbolic route from uptown to downtown. It's a day for many of the Indian "tribes" to assemble in one place, and examine one another's suits, something which they are unable to do on Mardi Gras day, when they randomly meet in isolated neighborhoods. It's also a time for ethnic solidarity, a coming together of tribes which contrasts sharply with the bitter rivalry and divisions between uptown and downtown tribes which erupted in violence in years past. Just how precarious this unity can be, though, is illustrated by the fact that not all of the tribes are present; the others will wait two weeks hence for "Super Sunday" and follow a different route, crossing St. Charles Avenue towards the river rather than Canal Street towards downtown. This split is based on emerging black nationalism which is effectuating new divisions in the Indian groups and the community at large. It seems that the parade organizers, which include members of the Tambourine and Fan organization, objected to one of the tribes allowing a white anthropology student to mask Indian in the parade. The tribe was excluded from the event and has subsequently organized its own celebration with other sympathizers. The followers of each parade are not politicized to one side or the other by implication, but the fact of changing political consciousness has been accentuated by this development. Protective of outsiders who have successfully exploited the local culture through recordings, films, and other remunerative pursuits, some of the Indians have become militantly anti-white. Organized political activity is noticeably weak, however, as a recent demonstration for African Solidarity Day indicated. In marked contrast to the throngs who come out to follow the Indians, there were no more than a half dozen people gathered in the same Shakespeare Park to support the nationalist African liberation movement that day.

Politics aside, it's a beautiful balmy Sunday, and the parade gets underway just as many of the neighborhood churches are letting out. Everyone seems happy about the weather, markedly different from the cold, wet Mardi Gras over a month before.

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There's a wild splash of colors everywhere, and spyboys and flagboys, Indians who perform distinct functions on Mardi Gras day, are hollering about how pretty they look while posing for the hordes of neighborhood people running around eagerly snapping photos. The Tambourine and Fan Social Aid and Pleasure Club is lined up behind its red and yellow street-width banner, and the Scene Boosters, Zulu Club, and Young Men's Olympians are gathering their people for the parade. Tubas, saxophones, trumpets, drums, and trombones perk up a few choruses of Little Liza Jane and the Olympia Brass Band is ready to "party hearty" in the streets.

As the parade snakes downtown, Central City is enveloped in Carnival fever as crowds of second liners join in choruses with the Indians. Beating on bottles, tambourines, conga drums, or simply clapping, the crowd answers the lively verses of the solo vocalists, who lead the clusters of marchers in a swirling street dance which rocks the neighborhood. The hot noonday sun gradually induces a parching thirst, and marchers begin to hustle into one of a dozen nearby bars, grab a beer in a brown paper bag, and try to catch up to the parade. The chiefs will periodically stall the line of march while their followers go inside for brew. This is not the ordinary parade, after all, and instead of standing uncomfortably on the sidelines and watching the parade pass, one is compelled to participate in the parade and watch the neighborhood go by.

By one o'clock the first groups begin to spill out of Central City into the Central Business District. The whole character of the event changes as they pass under the expressway and enter the open spaces occupied by government buildings, the Bus Terminal, Post Office, and Plaza Towers, once known as the "battlefront" where Indians engaged in violent gang wars at the New Basin Canal. Today modern glass and concrete architecture dominates the environment, neatly arranged with lawns and fountains. As puzzled motorists ride by with their car windows rolled up, the parade suddenly feels different, as if detached from its mother ship. The chanting no longer echoes through the narrow streets and alleyways of the uptown neighborhood, but dissipates into the vast expanse of space, or is momentarily drowned out by a huge Greyhound bus roaring out of the city. Not until the group reaches the residential downtown neighborhoods will the soulful warmth of community interaction be recaptured.

Meanwhile, there is another St. Joseph's celebration in progress at dozens of small churches and homes throughout the city. In the Italian community, exquisite altars bearing food, flowers, candles, and religious statues are constructed in the home, and announcements in the newspaper invite the public to view them before the food is given away to the poor. A similar tradition exists in the black community, but the altars are constructed in the Spiritual churches, and the food is shared by the members of its congregation following a special St. Joseph service.

Typical of many of the St. Joseph feasts in the Spiritual churches was the one at the Israelite Spiritualist Church in the Seventh Ward this year. Guided by Archbishop E. J. Johnson, the church serves as a center for other Spiritual congregations in the city, including one on Baronne Street in Central City. In fact, members of that uptown congregation were present at the ceremony this year, inasmuch as they had not constructed their own altar for the first time in many years. The multi-tiered altar, cen-

The Afro-American Celebration of St. Joseph's Day

tered just below the pulpit in this spacious modern church, was filled with a cornucopia, and a near life-sized statue of St. Joseph presided over it. Cross-shaped breads, pineapples, and homemade cakes of every flavor were in abundance, and festivity filled the air. Mother Magee, a vivacious church elder, welcomed guests and coordinated the entire celebration, which culminated in a buffet banquet which offered more appetizing dishes than could possibly be tasted, even in small quantities.

The members of the congregation, many of whom are women who wear white turbans and robes, were seated in the pews, quietly conversing while partaking of the excellent cuisine. There were several teenagers dressed in their Sunday best attending the event, but their numbers were few, and except for the distinguished Bishop Johnson, there were hardly any men present, a pattern which seems to recur in other Spiritual churches both in New Orleans and the West Indies.

The Spiritualist faith in New Orleans is a loosely organized religious movement which appears to have been transplanted to the South in the early part of the century by a fervent proselytizer named Leith Anderson. It is firmly rooted in traditional Christian theology, but places great emphasis on the role of the saints, and incorporates testifying and prophesy in its services. Although in conformity with certain Catholic religious practices, the Spiritual movement successfully democratized the church in a number of ways. First of all, while the Catholic Church only recently departed from the use of Latin in the mass, the Spiritualists were preaching in English and encouraging Bible study among their membership very early on. While the priest served as a mediator between man and God in the Catholic confessional, the Spiritualists were able to communicate directly with Him through testifying, and spirit possession often occurs during fervent evangelical sessions.

The saints, too, are vital figures in the daily lives of Spiritualist adherents, and exploring different saints to resolve a variety of problems and grant wishes can bring good fortune to the faithful. But perhaps the most unusual figure in their theological pantheon is the Indian chief Black Hawk, whose bust sits prominently in many of the Spiritual churches, often adjacent Mother Mary or St. Joseph on one of the many altars to be found there. At the Baronne Street shrine, Black Hawk services are held for nine consecutive Fridays, and the spirit of this Indian is summoned by an Indian dance. As one of the church elders explained, "When you call on these spirits, they *will* come in." Black Hawk is a very powerful figure, and church people often pray to him to get their friends or family members out of jail. Although there is insufficient documentation to historically verify how this fusion of beliefs came about, it is known that Leith Anderson was of mixed black and Indian parentage and may have been the sole transmitter of the idea. There are numerous examples of African and Indian cultural fusions in other religious movements in the New World, and many of them seem to indicate that the religious practices may have served to justify the social facts of intermarriage between Africans and Indians. This, of course, was known to have happened in New Orleans, although to what extent is not known.

St. Joseph and the Indian chief, then, represent pivotal symbolic figures linking distinctive but overlapping ritual complexes in the Afro-American community. Whether the Indian motif is based on actual genealogical linkages, an historical fusion of cultural themes, a reinvention of myth, or diffusion from afar may never be

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known, but this powerful symbol is a reality in the everyday lives of a significant number of people.

The Mardi Gras Indian tribes and the Spiritual churches are "voluntary" associations which reflect some of the continuities and contrasts in the neighborhood life of black New Orleans, and provide avenues of self-expression, solidarity, and self-help for their memberships. These organizations are black institutions, and function in the context of symbols and idea systems that often have more meaning for the social actors than for outsiders, who tend to judge them on the basis of mainstream social values. The complex imagery, symbolism, and infrastructure of these associations serve to mystify them in extraordinary ways despite the fact that they are fairly traditional in terms of the functions they fulfill.

The magic of St. Joseph's day is that it not only captures the imagination of such diverse groups as Mardi Gras Indians and Spiritualists, but that it involves a range of ethnic groups in festive activity. As someone once remarked, nearly everyone in New Orleans is catholic with a small "c." The point is, of course, that the cross-cultural fertilization that remains a distinctive feature of social life in New Orleans also holds the key to the future of inter-ethnic understanding. The trans-cultural myopia which spawned the reactionary provincialism of the past is bound to yield to cooperation and mutual respect as our citizens learn more about the rich traditions which have enhanced the social and recreational life of this truly plural community.



*Olivia Sorrel: Oldest Treme Griot
Photo: Merle Ramsey*

**The St. Mark's Ethnic Heritage Project:
A Model for Ethnic Studies
by
Margery Freeman**

In 1977, a group of young people from the predominantly black Treme/Seventh Ward community of New Orleans went into their community with tape recorders to gather its history from neighbors and friends. They talked with priests and storekeepers, politicians and schoolteachers, public leaders and private citizens. In the kitchens, on the streets and porches, they interviewed nearly 80 people. And by the time they were through, they had discovered how their families and neighbors had endured and survived, how they had acquired and mastered the skills of self-sufficiency through years of trial and error in a white-dominated society.

The young people who recorded these stories were participants in an Ethnic Heritage Studies Project sponsored by St. Mark's Community Center which adjoins the Treme community. For sixty years, St. Mark's has played a vital role in its com-

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munity's history by offering education, recreation, worship, and health care to the residents of the area. Beginning as "The Church of All Nations" on Esplanade Avenue, St. Mark's has served the needs of each ethnic group coming to New Orleans in the twentieth century. For example, as early as the 1920's English classes and worship services in Italian were held for recently-arrived Sicilian immigrants. Later, the Methodist women who staffed St. Mark's organized annual international festivals which featured pageants, games, and food from the nations of Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. A free medical and dental clinic operated out of St. Mark's until the 1940's, serving both black and white clients.

Even during the era of segregation, St. Mark's opened its doors to integrated groups for meetings although most Church and Center activities were for whites only. In the 1960's, St. Mark's staff and members participated in the city's integration struggles. The Church's pastor, Lloyd Foreman, was one of two white parents who challenged a massive school boycott and braved threats of violence from white racists to send his six-year-old daughter to Frantz School in 1960 — the first year of school integration.

In the early 1970's, St. Mark's strengthened its traditional leadership role in education and social service. It welcomed young people from all over the city into its recreation programs; it provided meals and shelter for out-of-town visitors; and it initiated several experimental educational programs, including the Free University, Gateway High School, the Free School of New Orleans, and Treme Street Academy. By 1977, the Community Center was serving hundreds of young people each day, most of whom were from the Treme/Seventh Ward.

Thus it was out of a natural curiosity to explore the cultural and social roots of the Center's young clientele that we of the St. Mark's staff sought funds to undertake an oral history in this Treme/Seventh Ward neighborhood. Also, continuing St. Mark's time-honored tradition, we wanted our project to be an innovative, youth-serving program.

So we prepared a proposal, using as our model *Foxfire*, a Georgia high school folk culture publication produced by high school students. In the introduction to *The Foxfire Book* (1974) we found our goal:

If . . . the eloquent and haunting stories of suffering and sharing and building and healing and planting and harvesting . . . are to be saved at all, for whatever reason, they must be saved now; and the logical researchers are the grandchildren, not university researchers from the outside. In the process, these grandchildren (and we) gain an invaluable, unique knowledge about their own roots, heritage, and culture. Suddenly they discover their families — previously people to be ignored in the face of the seventies — as pre-television, pre-automobile, pre-flight individuals who endured and survived the incredible task of total self-sufficiency, and came out of it all with a perspective on ourselves as a country that we are not likely to see again. They have something to tell us about self-reliance, human interdependence, and the human spirit that we would do well to listen to.

To our good fortune, we received a one-year grant from the U.S. Office of Educa-

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tion's Ethnic Heritage Studies Program (E.S.E.A. Title IX) to prepare a videotape oral history documentary of the Treme/Seventh Ward, and to develop an ethnic studies program around that oral history which could be used by students and community groups of Louisiana. We were also — and most importantly — to guide a team of high school and college students from the Treme/Seventh Ward as *they* completed the oral history. In this way, we would indeed be living by our belief that "the logical researchers are the grandchildren."

We began as a very untrained team since the only "requirement" for working on the Project was that each person (except myself) be from the Treme/Seventh Ward community. Yet this lack of expertise was actually part of our purpose: we wanted to develop a program that would inspire and motivate other people to undertake similar projects. We wanted other high school and college students, other community groups, to see our work, and say, "I can do that." Throughout our year's work, we sought to provide this model for others: we recorded our training processes, we taped our team meetings, we documented each success and each problem. At the year's end, we made a slide/tape presentation, "The Making of St. Mark's Ethnic Heritage Program," summarizing our year's experiences.

We chose "oral history" as our medium because of its power: How often, we asked ourselves, have we found young people listening spellbound to their grandmothers, their aunts, or some older neighbor tell stories from their childhood? Yet how often have these same boys and girls — or men and women — announced "I hate history" even as they love to tell and hear such stories? From our observations, we concluded that oral history could do more for present-day young people than written history. We believed that by recording the stories of Treme/Seventh Ward's black residents, our team of students — and later all the other people who would use our program — would recognize that history is how we talk, work, play, love, worship. And that storytellers are the real keepers of our history.

But the real power of oral history is in the fact that when people tell stories about what has happened they tell in the first person: "I didn't say a thing, I was saying Hail Marys all the while, I was so frightened . . ." or "It was then that I knew I was going to get my mama out of that situation, and that I was never going to do . . ." First-person accounts are compelling models because they are the stories of ordinary people saying "I can do this," and "I will not do that."

In other words, we chose oral history for our ethnic studies project because we wanted to make people feel proud of their heritage, and we wanted them to be inspired to act decisively in their own lives.

Our first task as a Project team was to educate ourselves about the community. We researched different aspects of New Orleans' history. And then we gave workshops for one another on what we had learned. We invited suggestions and assistance from an Advisory Board which included community people, professional historians, and audio-video technicians. We toured Treme/Seventh Ward on foot and by car: Each team member acted as guide for his own neighborhood and told stories — about the lottery man who always came up to your back door to get your number; or the storekeeper who gave big sugar cookies as *lagniappe*; or about how people took off "Blue Monday" because they were tired from Sunday.

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Then we began to interview — first members of our families, and eventually many of the *griots* of the community. We interviewed and logged tens of hours of stories. Then we selected and edited (what a struggle!) those portions of people's experiences which we felt would truly reflect the life of the community — its beliefs, celebrations, tragedies and triumphs.

By September 1978 we had a one-hour videotape documentary about Tremé/Seventh Ward which we called "Tremé/Seventh Ward Griots." We chose the name to reflect the African heritage of the people we interviewed, for *griot* is the West African name for "storyteller" or tribal historian.

While our student team worked on the videotape documentary, the Project staff developed a guide to New Orleans' ethnic heritage to be used, with the oral history, as an ethnic studies program for people of Louisiana. The program was conceived as a journey into a remarkably diverse black neighborhood in New Orleans; the study of Tremé/Seventh Ward would be a tool, an example, for students to use to explore the values, customs, and traditions of their own communities.

With our documentary and guide in hand, we went to teachers and community groups and asked them to try out our materials. In the summer of 1978 and the spring of 1979 we showed our documentary and pilot tested many of our ethnic heritage activities with groups of people at day camps, community centers, schools, and colleges in and around New Orleans.

We revised our program many times during the year as a result of the pilot test experiences. We quickly found that just because people can say "I am black" or "I am Catholic" does not mean they can either articulate their ethnic identity, deal with it easily, or recognize and appreciate the ethnic traditions of others. We found that people, especially teenagers, need a sense of belonging and acceptance before they are willing to explore and inquire into the ethnic heritage even of their own families and communities.

Because our society is so permeated with racial stereotypes, fears, preconceptions and misunderstandings, we knew that our initial activities had to establish an accepting atmosphere free of any taint of racism or ethnocentrism. In one class, for example, the teacher began his first day by asking students to share examples of family traditions and customs. A young member of the Seventh Ward Tamborine and Fan youth organization described the excitement of "following the Indians" on Mardi Gras. The class listened to his story with interest — he was accepted. His self-identity was established so he was free to listen to others, to inquire into the customs and values of his classmates.

Yet in order for people to increase their appreciation for the experiences of different ethnic and racial groups, we realized that they first have to empathize with those other people. This is especially difficult among young people who identify themselves only as "black" and "white"; who are "white" before they are "Irish-American" or "of German parentage"; or are "black" before they are "creole" or "from Mississippi." So in order to reach across the gulf separating racial groups, we sought analogies among our various heritages:

In one class a young girl of Italian descent participated in a role-playing activity in which a group of students enacted the story of the lynching of 12 Italians in 1891 by

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leading white citizens of New Orleans who killed them because the Chief of Police had been murdered, and the rumor was that he muttered "the Dagoes did it" as he died. This student learned that the stereotype of a "dirty, thieving Dago" arose out of the dreadfully overcrowded and poverty-ridden conditions her Sicilian grandparents had lived in in the Treme district. After the activity she was better able to empathize with her black classmates who today live in Treme. And both black and white students in the class recognized that prejudice and discrimination have often crossed racial lines.

However, we also learned that sometimes a teacher's racial or ethnic biases build walls rather than bridges to her students. "Isn't she beautiful!" was one teacher's appraisal of a "white" looking black person one day as her class was looking at pictures representing "assimilation." To her color-conscious class of black teenagers, the remark bespoke a bias toward fair-skinned people. In that atmosphere no one felt free to share feelings of racial pride. In another instance, a well-intentioned white teacher began an "up front" discussion of racial experiences by asking one of his students how it felt to be "dark-skinned." Only the student he asked was a light, reddish-skinned black girl who in her own community had never been considered "dark." She met the question with silence. The discussion, and the teacher, were confounded.

From our experience, we concluded that teachers of ethnic studies must first recognize the extent to which racial and ethnic prejudices have produced negative stereotypes and cultural ignorance among people in the United States. They must also confront their own ethnocentrism and be sensitive in selecting instructional models and examples.

Successful teachers of ethnic studies will be aware of the difficulties young people — especially minority youth — go through in their search for their ethnic and racial heritage. They will help to analyze the contradictory or conflicting values and customs that their students face at home, in the community, and in the larger society. They will convince their students that they prize the cultural diversity of each ethnic and racial group. By such actions and attitudes, they will enable their students to acquire the pride and knowledge they need to act decisively and morally on issues which affect us all.

At the end of our year's work we celebrated ourselves! We who had shared much together as Project team members, as community *griots*, as advisors, and as students, felt proud of the contribution we had made to New Orleans ethnic studies. And we had gained a deeper appreciation of the rich heritage of the Treme/Seventh Ward community.

In the fall of 1978 we sponsored, with help from the Louisiana Committee on the Humanities, a "Heritage Day in Treme" where young and old residents of the area demonstrated in songs, stories, arts and crafts, poetry and film the diversity and vitality of the community's culture.

But the fruits of our work are not only in the community pride we feel. Nor are they contained simply in the ethnic heritage program we prepared. The lasting results of our work can be seen in the ethnic studies projects which we helped to begin in other classrooms and community centers. In Edgar, Louisiana, high school students are

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interviewing river boat captains about their work; Mandeville junior high school students have taped interviews with old-time residents; young people from the Baptist Friendship House have completed a slide/tape story of their Faubourg Marigny community; at high schools, colleges, and community centers all over New Orleans, students now see our "Treme/Seventh Ward Griots" documentary as part of their study of Louisiana history and culture. At St. Mark's itself we have collected many of the "unused" stories from our year's interviews into a book which we call "Quartee Red Beans, Quartee Rice: Stories of the Treme/Seventh Ward."

We believe that ethnic studies will continue to expand in New Orleans because more and more citizens are learning to value and preserve those traditions and customs which have previously been taken for granted. But the pressures of time are great: lifestyles are changing rapidly, and many young people of New Orleans are alienated from their own heritages and isolated from any knowledge of the cultures and traditions of other ethnic groups in the city. Efforts to document and disseminate information about New Orleans' ethnic heritage are still largely confined to local history societies, museums, and universities. School textbooks on Louisiana history are not only inadequate but in many cases are offensive and damaging to ethnic understanding.

The main goal of ethnic studies in the future must be to enable community residents — especially young people — to identify their own heritage and create their own programs to preserve and celebrate that heritage. We believe the St. Mark's Ethnic Heritage Project can be a model for such future work.